(02)
M4



**YUN INTERVIEW**
**SIR GUY MILLARD**
**FYFIELD, ENGLAND**
**APRIL 20, 1991**
**INTERVIEWER: JAMES SUTTERLIN**

Table of Contents

The 1956 Suez Crisis

YUN INTERVIEW
SIR GUY MILLARD
FYFIELD, ENGLAND
APRIL 20, 1991
INTERVIEWER: JAMES SUTTERLIN

JS I would like first to express appreciation for your willingness to participate in this Yale University oral history project related to the United Nations. If I might I would like first to ask you to indicate just for the record what your position was in the Prime Minister's office in 1956 before and during the Suez Crisis.

GM I was the Prime Minister's private secretary, the number two private secretary, primarily dealing with foreign affairs, relations with the Foreign Office itself, but not entirely because there were four of us and we all obviously had to be interchangeable and I had to deal with internal affairs as well. We very often were on duty, for example, alone at Chequers in which case one dealt with the whole spectrum of things, but obviously as I was seconded from the Foreign Office myself - there were two of us - we primarily dealt with foreign affairs, defense affairs and so on. Whereas the other two concentrated more on the internal side.

JS And what had your background been in the Foreign Office before assuming this position?

GM I had joined the Foreign Office just before the war, I left it a time during the war; I came back and my first

post was in Paris in the Embassy for four years. I then went to Turkey for three years. I came back and went to the Imperial Defense College. And then I dealt for two years as the assistant to the head of an office called in those days, the African Department, concerned with Egypt and the Sudan, during which time, of course, we had the negotiations for the evacuation of the Suez Canal base, which was signed in 1954. So I dealt with that in a comparatively junior capacity. I had been Eden's junior Private Secretary for a time during the war when I came back from the Navy, and when he became Prime Minister, he asked me to go with him to 10 Downing Street.

JS I see, so you had background both with him as a person and also background in the Foreign Office with the Middle East question [GM: to a certain extent], which leads me to my first question. Being so closely associated could you give an assessment of what mental background Anthony Eden brought to the period of the Suez crisis? Did he do so with some foregone conclusions? Was this a new subject for him? Was global strategic concern foremost in his mind? What was his mentality then?

GM Well it certainly wasn't a new subject for him because he'd been dealing with foreign affairs for most of his life. He was also very much preoccupied with the Middle East. I think he mistrusted Nasser very much from the time he became Prime Minister because of his previous

experiences as Foreign Secretary. He had met Nasser, I think i'm right in saying, early in 1955, just before he became Prime Minister and they had a long discussion of the propaganda which Radio Cairo and others were beaming out aimed at western interests in general and British interests in particular, and Nasser gave him a kind of assurance that this propaganda would be reduced if not eliminated. Of course it went on more than ever. Eden, I think, felt a sense of betrayal there. Also, of course, when the Canal crisis broke, the nationalization of the Canal, he felt that this was a threat to his own political position because he had been Foreign Secretary when the Suez Canal Base was evacuated, that agreement with the Egyptians whereby we removed our troops from the Suez Canal Zone and therefore diminished our capacity to react to any threat coming from the Egyptians or from the Middle East. That had been a controversial matter in the Conservative Party and still was very much so at the time of the Suez thing. I think that Eden felt that to a certain extent his own position was compromised by the nationalization of the Canal. He was under very strong pressure from a small group of right-wing conservatives, the so-called Suez group. I don't think they were very important. Perhaps he overestimated their importance.

JS In reading through the literature from the time, including his own memoirs and especially Selwyn Lloyd's,

there are frequent comparisons of Nasser with Hitler and in fact some of the language is very comparable to what was used more recently with regards to Saddam Hussein, even the expressions of concern about global oil supplies and so forth are similar. Was this, in fact, something which Anthony Eden saw in that perspective, he saw Nasser as a globally dangerous person with Hitler-like tendencies?

GM Well, yes, I think it is. I think that he saw Nasser in very much the same terms as perhaps President Bush sees Saddam Hussein now, namely as a threat to world order, a threat to the stability of the Middle East, a threat to Western interests in general and to British interests in particular, since perhaps we had more interest in the Middle East than any other Western power at that time.

JS Was the Prime Minister's approach in dealing with this particular question, I suppose other questions as well, but particularly this crisis which was a very serious one, was it a hands-on approach from the beginning? Was he so-to-speak in charge, or did he tend to delegate action with regard to Egypt and the crisis to the Foreign Secretary?

GM No, I think it fair to say that it was very much a hands-on approach from the beginning. Because he felt it was a threat to our national interests, a very large threat, and he was convinced at that time - not only he, but I

think the government in general and Chiefs of Staff -were convinced that there was a very serious threat to our oil supplies through the Suez Canal. It must be remembered that we were entirely dependent upon Middle East oil at that time. The oil in the North Sea had not been discovered or even dreamt about and you will remember that when Khrushchev and Bulganin came to see Eden, paid this official visit to Eden in the early summer of 1956, he told them that in the event of a threat to our vital interests, of an interruption of oil supplies, we would be prepared to fight. And maybe that encouraged them to twist the lion's tail, I don't know, it has always been thought that perhaps it did.

JS But there was a specific discussion at that point with the Soviets?

GM Yes.

JS Because this brings me to a later question but I think I'll jump ahead at this point because later, of course, when the crisis was in full flux, Bulganin sent threatening letters both to the British and to the French. My question is had there been any intermediary contact between the British, the Prime Minister, and the Soviets, that is, between this meeting with Khrushchev in the summer and then the time when the threats came from the Soviets?

GM I suppose during the course of the crisis there had been

messages passing to and fro, but I don't recall any particular contacts with the Soviet government before the nationalization of the Canal, and between the visit by Khrushchev and Bulganin and the outbreak of the Suez crisis in late July '56.

JS From your perspective did you conclude that Eden had any particular predispositions toward Israel, was he inclined one way or the other toward the country or the leadership, or indeed toward the events which led to its creation?

GM No, he wasn't particularly pro-Israel.

JS Can one say the opposite?

GM No, I don't think one can.

JS Do you think that he felt that the partition and the establishment of the state was in fact a positive development?

GM Well, I don't think anybody really could consider it a positive development in the sense that ever since then the Middle East has been inherently unstable and any British Foreign Secretary, especially one with the long background of experience that Eden had, must be obliged to take that into account. It is a threat to the stability of the Middle East. Against that, of course, you must set the fact that the Jews now have a national home, which they owe very largely to British policy. This again is something that the Arabs held against us.

JS At that particular time, just as the crisis was reaching its high point, the British -- and I believe perhaps the Prime Minister was directly involved in this but I'd like your confirmation -- did give warning to Israel that if there should be an attack against Jordan that the mutual assistance pact between England and Jordan would come into effect. Was that a serious move? Some people on the Israeli side have suggested that this was simply a feint to disguise what the ultimate purpose was, to get their cooperation?

GM No, that is not so. Certainly a warning was given to Israel, yes, and I think in fact some contingency planning was done in the event of an outbreak of a war in which the Israelis would be involved with Jordan because we had this commitment to Jordan.

JS So, it was serious?

GM Yes.

JS And indeed that was the nature of your contact at that point with Israel?

GM Yes.

JS I want to go ahead now to one of the more controversial aspects of this crisis, and that is the American role. Could you describe the background of Anthony Eden's expectations from the American side? He was well acquainted, if I'm not mistaken, with President Eisenhower.

GM Certainly, he was well acquainted with Eisenhower, and I think a good friend of Eisenhower up to the time of the British attack on Egypt. I think that he received conflicting signals. Eisenhower, I don't think, ever disguised his antagonism to the use of force in this crisis. Foster Dulles sometimes gave very ambiguous messages on that and I think that maybe this was one of the contributing causes to a misunderstanding which eventually arose between the British and the Americans.

JS That was precisely my question because again, reading through the American records at least, the attitude of the President was quite clear from the beginning.

GM Yes, it was clear. I don't think he ever made it specific, I don't think he ever specifically said that if you attack Egypt we will do everything in our power to stop you. That certainly wasn't clear. You know MacMillan paid this visit to Washington during the course of the crisis and he came back with a sort of optimistic, from our point of view, assessment of what the American action would be. I think it is fair to say that in Eden's mind - and no doubt in MacMillan's mind as well - the thought was that when we attacked, the Americans would make a fuss, yes, that it would cause a certain amount of trouble and anger in American relations, but in the last resort they would not oppose us.

JS Somewhat similar to the assumption a good many years

later with regard to the Falklands at that point.

GM One must remember, I think, that one of the unspoken aims of the whole operation which was mounted was to overthrow Nasser, and the American government shared this aim. Foster Dulles had made that quite clear on various occasions, and indeed it was one of the American objectives in withdrawing American aid for the High Aswan Dam, that this would help to precipitate the overthrow of Nasser.

JS I wanted to ask about that in particular. Subsequently Britain also withdrew its aid from the Aswan Dam, but was there an inclination on the Prime Minister's part, and indeed on others' parts, to attribute Nasser's action in nationalizing the Canal specifically to the Dulles action in withdrawing the Aswan aid?

GM Yes, I think there was. The actual withdrawal of aid, if I remember rightly, had been agreed between the British and American governments. What had not been agreed was the timing of the communication and the manner of it, and we felt that we had been rushed, in the way in which it was done. It was done finally without consultation and to some extent I think that Eden and Selwyn Lloyd and the government in general attributed Nasser's violent reaction partly to the way in which this was done.

JS You just mentioned that it was in the mutual interests of the U.S., of the U.K., and of France to get rid of Nasser

and there was, I think, some consultation between the U.S. and France about what to do about Nasser. Were other things thought of besides withdrawing the aid from the Aswan Dam? Were there other ideas as to how to get rid of Nasser or did the military element begin to figure in British thinking fairly early?

GM It certainly figured in British thinking from the time of the nationalization of the Canal onward. In other words, that if this crisis couldn't be settled by diplomatic means then in the last resort the use of force was contemplated from the very beginning. The Government committed themselves to that, they committed themselves to a military plan and so on, almost from the first day, and certainly one of the objectives of the military operation would have been to overthrow Nasser. One must also remember that originally the operation, when it was launched, if it was launched, was designed to be launched against Alexandria and to go to Cairo with the object of overthrowing Nasser and thereby solving the problem of the Canal, killing two birds with one stone you might say. In the course of the planning, not for political reasons, but primarily for military reason, I think, this was changed. And the operation which was originally called Musketeer then became Musketeer Revised. The objective was switched to Port Said and the Canal.

JS Given what is now happening in Iraq, the questions I

think is especially important as to what ultimate objective was foreseen at that time. Once Nasser was eliminated what was going to be next?

GM I think the attitude was that one step at a time was enough for us. Presumably one of the objectives behind the recent operations in the Gulf was to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Unfortunately, it hasn't happened. I don't think that one need have a complete plan for replacing a dictator with some other form of government, particularly if he is a dictator of the kind that Saddam Hussein is. It is quite a step forward to overthrow him in the first place, regardless of what comes next.

JS The real point of this question, I suppose, is the question of sovereignty over the Canal and the internationalization of the Canal utilization. British thinking and British planning at the highest level, did it foresee a continuation of the trend, that is, the withdrawal of the British base and in fact the internationalization of the Canal, if not nationalized by the Egyptians at least recognition of Egyptian sovereignty?

GM Yes, I think so. The Canal always had surely been international, it was an international waterway. That is how we regarded it. Not as something that belonged exclusively to the British and the French. But you remember that Selwyn Lloyd had this long negotiation with

Egyptian Foreign Minister Fawzi in the United Nations and they came to an agreement more or less on six principles. one of which was respect for Egyptian sovereignty over the Canal, but its international operation.

JS If I could skip ahead to those talks for a moment. Indeed they did reach agreement on quite a few of the six points at that stage. There are various versions of exactly who initiated those talks, whether it was Selwyn Lloyd or Dag Hammarskjold. Do you have any particular views on that? Do you recall exactly how you saw it from Number Ten Downing Street, so to speak? Was it the Secretary General of the United Nations who was intervening, if you will, in order to bring the three parties together, or was it a British initiative?

GM I'm afraid I can't recall at this point.

JS There is another related question. The Secretary General, Dag Hammarskjold, as those talks were concluded, I believe had the impression that really substantial progress had been made and that the key to the crisis had been found. That does not reflect the thinking of the French. I wondered about the British, whether the Prime Minister felt that the problem was at a hopeful stage?

GM I don't think it affected our thinking either really because if you remember, the resolution which was passed in the UN was divided into two parts. The first part approved the six principles and the second part called

for Egypt to put forward a scheme for their operation. That part failed; it was vetoed. So no, our government would not have regarded the upshot as an adequate solution to the crisis.

JS We got a little ahead of the story there. I want to go back to ask when, if it can be defined, on the British side there was first an awareness of the possibility of Israel initiating an attack against Egypt, if not the question of British and French participation?

GM This brings me back to what I said about Jordan. There was a very great deal of tension at that time between Israel and the neighboring Arab countries, stimulated by Nasser who'd created this Middle East command, and there were constant boarder raids against Israel primarily from Egypt but also, I think, from Jordan, and this is what gave rise to the threat of military operations between Israel and Jordan in which we might become involved. So to that extent certainly the prospect of Israeli involvement was already taken into account. The actual knowledge of the possibility of an Israeli attack on Egypt did not come to our notice until the French told us, the French having been in contact the Israelis on this question for a considerable period of time.

JS But at least from the first of September.

GM I don't know.

JS This brings me to ask how would you define or comment on

the relationship between Anthony Eden and Guy Mollet and for that matter Pineau who seems to have been very important on the French side. Was there a relationship of trust, confidence, had they known each other for long?

GM Relations were very good. Mollet was very pro British, if I may say so. In fact our relations with the French government at that time were a great deal easier than they were subsequently after General De Gaulle assumed power. Mollet knew England well, he was a professor of English I think, or a teacher, and was very well disposed and a very easy man to deal with, and certainly relations were good between him and Eden, and Pineau as well. I don't think they had known each other for a very long time, but we had very easy relations with the French Government at that time. It's one of the sad things about Suez that probably we had a better relationship with the French at that time than we had for many many years after. A relationship which was, of course, damaged by what happened.

JS Why, because of French dissatisfaction with the British miliary performance?

GM No, because the French felt that we let them down by calling the operation off.

JS Which brings me to another question which comes later in the series. The Israelis were actually the first to accept the ceasefire, in fact they accepted before the

British had hardly landed. What was the reaction in the PM's office to that?

GM I think it caused a certain amount of consternation, but the fact is the Israelis accepted the cease fire because they had already obtained their objectives. They were on the Canal. But I think also that at that time, the thought was gaining ground that we would have to call the operation off anyway because of American pressure.

JS And what was the most effective form of American pressure, the financial pressure, or were there others?

GM Certainly I think the most effective was financial pressure, yes.

JS And you did see that at the time as direct pressure?

GM Yes.

JS Which brings me back to the question of Foster Dulles. A great deal has been written about the relationship between Eden, or at least the attitude of Eden toward Foster Dulles. Could you just from your own experience elaborate on this at all, any personal insights as to basis for the distrust if that was the correct characterization of the relationship, or simply dislike?

GM Eden didn't like Foster Dulles very much, that's true. I don't know whether Foster Dulles liked Eden, probably he did not. They were very different animals. Eden was an instinctive person of tremendous charm, about as different an animal from Foster Dulles as you could

imagine. Foster Dulles was very legalistic, he expressed himself in a very involved way which caused a certain amount of mistrust on Eden's part and of course the mistrust was enormously increased by what happened over the thing called the Suez Canal Users Association over which Eden felt that he'd been completely betrayed and deceived by Dulles.

JS Could you elaborate on that, why?

GM Well because as we understood it when Dulles produced this plan in London the object was to form an association to collect the dues, to deny them to Nasser unless he accepted as satisfactory the international regime for the canal. And if he didn't accept that, if necessary to force our way through. And this was the subject of an agreed statement both in London and in Washington. Eden made the statement in the House of Commons and it was read out in Washington by Dulles himself, or perhaps by a spokesman, in exactly the same terms. But Dulles almost immediately afterwards denied it by saying that he never really had any intention of forcing a way through, that this was never his concept of the organization. I think somebody said, "well you've taken all the teeth out of this", and he said "as far as I'm concerned it never had any teeth."

JS This idea I think was first formulated by Dulles, this Users Association, did you on the British side see it at

that time as simply a delaying device or did you think of it as something serious that might, if it hadn't lost its teeth, have offered a solution?

GM Eden thought it was put forth seriously by the American government, yes. Later he certainly came to regard it as a delaying device, which I think it was. I think Dulles' tactics, although perhaps we didn't realize it at the time, Dulles' tactics throughout the crisis were to put every possible obstacle in the way of the use of force and this was one of them.

JS And this is something that has always puzzled me - why then, at least from the British perception - did the Americans, and Dulles in particular, object so strongly when Britain and France took the matter to the Security Council?

GM That is more a question for the American government I think. My understanding was that Dulles perhaps was afraid of failure - there is always a problem in the UN whether a matter can be satisfactorily resolved there, it is subject to the Soviet veto, and so on. But I think also there was the problem of the Panama Canal and he was afraid of the repercussions of discussion in the UN and resolutions of the UN on that problem.

JS There had been, as you have said, military contingency planning at least on the British side from the time of the nationalization of the Canal - perhaps before, I

don't know as to that. But my question here is, was the Prime Minister involved directly in the military planning as well as the political aspects.

GM Yes, there was a small committee of ministers set up - the Foreign Secretary, the Secretary of State for War, the Secretary for Defense, one or two others, senior ministers who were consulted throughout, yes, on military planning. But obviously the primary responsibility lay with the Chiefs of Staff. But the Prime Minister was kept informed, yes.

JS Because this brings me back again to the question of, what was the objective of the initial military planning? I think there was a reserve call-up, things like that. Was a landing already foreseen at this earlier stage, and eventually plans to advance to Cairo? Or were there simply contingencies of an undefined nature for which military force might be necessary?

GM I think the planning was fairly specific. But it was held in reserve, the operation was held in reserve until it was judged that it became necessary. The original intention was to try and settle this by political means, obviously, but the military aspect was kept in reserve if all else failed. And this was something on which Eden and the British government never deceived the American government. He made it clear throughout to Eisenhower and Foster Dulles that in the last resort we were

prepared to use force to achieve what in our view would be a satisfactory settlement. This I think was why Foster Dulles made increasingly frantic, or increasingly vigorous, efforts to put obstacles in our way.

JS I want to go back now to the Israeli side for a minute. As we have mentioned, the French had contact, be it only through military channels initially, but when the stage of the Sèvres meeting was reached Ben-Gurion was there, Perez was there, Golda Meir. So the French had very high level contacts with the Israeli side. My question is, again - was there any contact between Anthony Eden and Ben Gurion or someone of that stature on the Israeli side before the Sèvres meeting which Selwyn Lloyd attended?

GM No.

JS None?

GM No.

JS That was entirely on the French side? This leads to another question and that is with regard to the activities of the intelligence services. Let me give you a background for this question. Christian Pineau contends that in fact the Americans were informed of the plans through intelligence channels. My question is - was there any such assumption on the British side, or indeed, were you aware of this through British intelligence prior to the briefing of the Prime Minister Eden about the French/Israeli plans.

GM I certainly was not aware of it and certainly I think that our government was unaware that the Americans had been informed about the French plan, if it's true - I doubt it's true. But I know nothing about what contact there was between intelligence services. I know very little about intelligence services, but I very much doubt if it's true because my understanding is that this French plan was elaborated with the Israelis in the utmost secrecy and indeed, it was treated with the utmost secrecy by our Government once the plan was revealed to us.

JS That was exactly my next question because I think that General Challe and another Frenchman came to London and first informed Anthony Eden of the plan. How narrow was the circle to which that was kept on the British side, how many people knew about it?

GM Very narrow indeed. I was present at that meeting, it was at Chequers, and Nutting was there. He obviously knew, and the head of the Foreign Office, Kirkpatrick. Selwyn Lloyd was recalled from New York, as you know, and I suppose the senior ministers who were members of the Egypt Committee were probably involved. Perhaps not all of them.

JS Certainly the timing itself, if this was the very first that was heard of it on the British side, then Selwyn Lloyd could not have known about the planning at the time

he was in New York. And it was evident that later the Ambassador there had not been informed even at the time the ultimatum was sent. Is that correct? Pierson Dixon was the Ambassador, I believe.

GM In the UN, yes, he was Ambassador. No, he didn't know anything.

JS Could you give the atmosphere of that meeting? That was a very important meeting that you were part of. Was there some surprise, shock, dismay, or simply interest at the ingenuity of what was being proposed?

GM It was certainly intense interest. Surprise, yes, shock, perhaps not so much. I mean, yes it was a total surprise to Eden, certainly to me, and to Anthony Nutting. He was shocked, Eden was rather less shocked for a special reason, because this expedition was ready and waiting. The shipping had been commandeered, reservists had been called up, the tanks had been loaded, and all that was sitting, waiting, and quite obviously couldn't be kept waiting indefinitely. You either had to launch the expedition or call the whole thing off. And therefore, the problem was that you needed a pretext. I think many people thought that if it had been possible to launch an expedition in the first few days after nationalization of the Canal, that this would have been accepted as a <u>fait accompli</u> by world opinion. I think that's probably true, but if you wait three months before you launch an

expedition obviously the thing acquires a totally different aspect, as indeed we saw in the Gulf. We had to have a whole series of UN resolutions, a kind of umbrella. We didn't have that umbrella. The French had produced this ingenious scheme in order to justify really the launching of the operation.

JS And was Anthony Eden's decision made in the course of that meeting to join it?

GM Oh no, of course not, no, we had to consult with Selwyn Lloyd who returned two days later, I think, and with his colleagues.

JS So within this limited circle, he did consult before making decisions?

GM Oh yes. The French, of course, had already taken their decision.

JS Yes. Looking back, it is always surprising to think that the Prime Minister of England, of the UK, and the French Prime Minister could have believed that this could have been carried out without some cooperation from the United States. Was this question even raised in the meeting, that is, what are the Americans going to do?

GM In the meeting with Challe and Gazier I don't recall it being raised. That's a point on which my memory fails me, I'm afraid.

JS And by entering into this plan, was this a way in which then Anthony Eden and the British government hoped to

achieve the objective which you already mentioned - that is, the ultimate elimination of Nasser and a change in status, or at least an improvement in what existed so far as the Canal was concerned.

GM Well the primary aim obviously was the internationalization of the Canal, to reverse what had happened, to reverse the nationalization, the sole control of the Canal by Egypt. The secondary aim was the overthrow of Nasser in the same way you could say that about the recent Gulf - the primary aim was to liberate Kuwait, the secondary was to overthrow Saddam Hussein.

JS With somewhat similar results...

GM With somewhat similar results... In both cases I think we could say that we won the war and lost the peace.

JS Could you comment on Eden's mental attitude as the crisis heightened? Did he become totally preoccupied with it, were there signs of strain, and on whom did he rely most heavily during these difficult days for advice and counsel?

GM There were certainly signs of strain, yes. It was a tremendous crisis politically for Eden and for the Government as a whole, and in a way for the nation. You must remember that there was very strong support for Eden in the country over Suez and originally, when the first debate took place in the House of Commons, the Labor Party perhaps were the most belligerent of all, saying

that "Nasser must be made to disgorge", and so on. As time went by of course their belligerence evaporated and they came to see some political advantage in opposing the Government. The consensus disappeared.

JS So that the domestic situation became a strain, if I may use that word, on the Prime Minister as well as the way in which the matters were developed...

GM Oh certainly, the strain was enormous, of course. The uproar in the House of Commons was almost unbearable for those who had to take part in it. But as far as who he relied on, he relied on Selwyn Lloyd,obviously, he was Foreign Secretary, and on the Head of the Foreign Office,

JS And who was viewed as completely loyal?

GM Sorry?

JS And who was viewed as completely loyal at that point, by the Prime Minister?

GM Well I think the members of this - as I say, the small so-called, I think it was called the Egypt Committee - yes, I think they were all behind him, with MacMillan perhaps most of all. He certainly relied on MacMillan. Anthony Head was another very close counselor and friend of Eden's. He was totally loyal certainly throughout. The one who expressed doubt almost from the beginning about the military option was Walter Monckton.

JS Who eventually resigned, is that right? Now I want to bring in the question of the Foreign Office at this

point. I suppose you in a sense were in addition to Selwyn Lloyd himself, representing the Foreign Office. But were you able to reflect in the Prime Minister's presence, so to speak, some of the views in the Foreign Office where there were some questions (certainly, after the action began) as to the wisdom of the course? In other words, were these doubts brought to the Prime Minister's action?

GM Oh, certainly after the action began, yes, there's no question about what the reaction of the Foreign Office was, at least of many of its members, perhaps not all of them. So it wasn't really necessary to bring these to his attention, it was obvious. But up to that point, the Foreign Office - at least at a certain level - were not fully in the picture.

JS It has been said that there was a general predisposition toward the Arab world in the Foreign Office rather than toward Israel. Number one, would you confirm that, and number two, if true, did that have any effect at all on the course of this particular action, or on the Prime Minister's thinking?

JS Well I don't think it had any effect on his thinking or his actions because if he had taken the views of the Arabists, so to speak, in the Foreign Office into account, he wouldn't have done it, or he would have done it differently. But it's certainly true, I think,

certainly true in our Foreign Office that the Arabists form a powerful element. I'm not saying that they dictate British policy even towards the Middle East, but they are a powerful element, of course they are - and rightly so, really. They've been trained to take a professional view of the Arab world.

JS But in the end that did not have any effect, really?

GM Well, as I said, they weren't in the picture. Below a certain level, they weren't in the picture.

JS Let's move on now to the actual period of the conflict, the issuance of the ultimatum by the UK and by France. At this point then the UN became very very much involved because the action - aside from that which was taking place on the front, so to speak - was mainly in New York. Did the Prime Minister have any particular attitude toward the UN, or indeed, toward Dag Hammarskjold? I believe that Selwyn Lloyd had met Dag Hammarskjold before. Was the Prime Minister acquainted with him?

GM Yes, he must have been. I'm afraid I don't know how well acquainted he was.

JS Did he look at the organization in New York as an organization on which one could rely, or not?

GM No, I don't think he did. I think he thought that it was unlikely that a satisfactory solution to the crisis would emerge from the UN. The UN after all has no independent existence at all, or very little independence apart from

the staff who run it. It's only what its members will vote for.

JS And matters at the UN took a rather complex turn when the question moved from the Security Council to the General Assembly where the veto does not apply. Was this a matter of grave concern, or was this simply one other element in a very complex picture as far as #10 Downing Street was concerned.

GM You mean after the military operation was launched?

JS Yes.

GM I don't think that was an element of great concern. No, I think the American attitude had much more weight.

JS And the Americans by then had introduced the resolution calling for immediate withdrawal. We've already spoken of the means of American pressure that the Americans used but, going ahead now to the outcome when the British did agree to withdraw, what do you think was the major element in bringing the British to this decision before the French took a similar one?

GM I think it was the pressure on the pound and the American refusal to allow us to exercise our drawing rights in the IMF.

JS So that remained then a decisive element. (GM: yes). What about the attitude of the Commonwealth? And in this connection, the influence of Lester Pearson, the Canadian. Was his voice heard strongly in London, in the

Prime Minister's office? Was there a very serious concern as to the effect the continuation of the action would have on the Commonwealth?

GM I suppose in the minds of those who place very great importance on the Commonwealth, yes. The Commonwealth after all was divided on this issue and Menzies, the Prime Minister of Australia, was very supportive of Eden throughout the crisis, even to the end. Lester Pearson was helpful in clearing up the mess afterward, so to speak, in evolving the scheme for the UN forces to take over. I think it was his idea as far as I remember. The people who obviously weren't helpful were the Indians but I doubt if that was a very powerful factor in Eden's thinking.

JS The origin of the peacekeeping idea has been examined and reexamined. But as far as you are aware it originated then in New York, or at least with Lester Pearson, and not in London. There has been some suggestion that there was a proposal made I think by Selwyn Lloyd in Commons for an idea somewhat similar to this that there should be a UN force that could take over.

GM I'm not sure where the idea originated honestly but I think that when it was put forward in New York we saw this as a helpful way of getting ourselves off the hook.

JS You did? And there was, though on the British side, at least initially, almost a determination that the British

troops should be part of this peacekeeping force. Why was that?

GM I think purely a matter of prestige, really. We didn't want to be totally humiliated in the aftermath of this disaster. And it would have been politically helpful for the Government to be able to say, "Well the British troops are still there."

JS In this connection, how much influence did the reporting and advice received in London from your permanent representative in New York have? I ask this because the point has frequently been made that it was totally unrealistic, given the circumstances in New York, to think that the British forces could have a part in the peacekeeping. The situation was not recognized as being impossible?

GM No doubt it came to be recognized as such. Maybe at the outset, we had hoped that it might be possible.

JS At what point did the Prime Minister's health become a factor in the situation, if at all?

GM He wasn't well - I don't think this really affected it. It certainly didn't affect for example his handling of the House of Commons, really. The man was totally - as far as this was possible - was in control in the House at that time when the pressures were enormous. The opposition was making the most tremendous row in the House of Commons. It was quite amazing actually that his

health stood up to all that but he never lost control of himself in the House of Commons. But obviously the strains on a man who was already ill undoubtedly were enormous.

JS Do you think that it affected the course of events in any way?

GM I think maybe that he was more sensitive to criticism and so on than he might otherwise have been but I doubt whether things would have been changed very much even if he had been in full possession of his health.

JS Which leads into the next question. Once the action was over, the decision had been taken to withdraw, the French appear to have retained their sang-froid and Pineau even played a certain role in arranging for the withdrawal of the Israeli forces from Gaza and Sharm el Sheikh. The British, at least looking at it from the outside, had more difficulty coming to grips with the defeat. Do you have any particular explanation of that? Was this related to the Prime Minister's health, the problem of taking strong leadership in the midst of disaster, so to speak? Or were there other elements involved?

GM I think the experience was more traumatic for the British than it was for the French, partly because we'd always had much closer relations with the United States. Therefore this very serious breach with the United States was more of a shock to the British government than it

would have been to the French. For after all, they'd often been at loggerheads with the Americans - perhaps not at loggerheads but they had much less close relations. They'd also had the problem of the war in Algeria and so on which had caused strains on relations with the United States. So I think the whole experience was less traumatic for them.

JS Whereas it was very traumatic for ...

GM Very, yes. And also I think perhaps the humiliation was more deeply felt in this country because after all the war was not so far away and we'd emerged triumphantly as victors with enormous prestige resulting from the war. Whereas the French had had a different experience.

JS In the planning initially of the whole conduct of the crisis on the British side, I asked earlier as to the basis of the assumption that in the end the Americans would not react with decisive pressure against military action. But I did not ask whether one other element was present in British thinking and that is, the effect of the US elections. It has been said by some that the British, and the French as well, thought that the United States would be immobilized, the President in particular, because of the immanence of US elections. And it was on that basis that conclusion was made that it was safe. What is your recollection?

GM I don't think that is true at all and I think that, if

anything, we should have to have taken into account the fact that the US elections were imminent and that this would make the American government more, rather than less, sensitive to what they would regard as a colonialist action. And I think we didn't take that sufficiently into account. But certainly I don't think anybody on our side thought that the imminence of elections would cause the United States to be paralyzed on this particular issue.

JS Was the completely opposite true? That is, was there an assumption that the very strong US reaction was motivated by domestic political concerns on the American side to ensure that Eisenhower would win the victory?

GM I think that is the conclusion we drew later, yes.

JS But only later?

GM Yes.

JS Not during the action? When this was over, if it can be considered to have been over, did the Prime Minister reach any overall conclusions as to what direction British policy should take in the light of the changed situation in the Middle East, or was it no longer possible for him to give that kind of direction to British policy?

GM Well you must remember that he went off after Suez. He was sick, he went off to Jamaica and was away from the country for two or three weeks, I think. Rab Butler took

over as acting head of the government and in effect was left with the job of clearing up the mess. Eden after all, his health was affected, his political position was very seriously damaged. I think not many people thought that he could really survive this blow as Prime Minister and in fact, he only lasted another two months. It really wasn't possible for him, I think, to do very much planning for the future.

JS And what were your, we might say, overall conclusions and impressions, perceptions as private secretary to the Prime Minister at this critical point? What did you emerge with as a skilled observer of people and of foreign policy? What conclusions did you reach as to the operation of government in the foreign policy field as a result of your participation in these events?

GM Well I think the only conclusion I could draw was that a very serious mistake had been made, with consequences that were seen as pretty disastrous at the time but which in the light of hindsight, became rather less disastrous. After all, Sadat - when he eventually replaced Nasser - was a considerable improvement. Our relations with other Arab countries, strangely enough, actually improved with the exception of Libya where there was a revolution and which was a special case, as well as in Iraq where there was also a revolution, making it also a special case. With Jordan, where they had been very strained because of

the domination of King Hussein by Nasser, by the Arab nationalist pressure you might say, our relations improved later. With Saudi Arabia they improved very considerably later for similar reasons. With the Gulf states also, they had been subject to very serious nationalist, fundamentalist pressure. And there again, we eventually achieved a much more satisfactory relationship on the basis of their independence. So, while there were very serious negative consequences, the picture wasn't perhaps quite as black as might have been feared, particularly by some of the Middle East experts.

JS And out of this, as a final question, the experiences of this crisis in which the UN played a prominent role, did you have the sense - you yourself, or others in leadership there - of a change in the attitude toward the UN, assessment of increased importance on the part of the UN or indeed of the Secretary-General, himself?

GM Yes, I think that one of the lessons to be drawn from the circumstances was that we couldn't ignore the UN in the future.

JS To get ahead of the story here, the same Secretary-General was in office later at the time of the Congo crisis, do you think that this caused the British side to have greater respect for the Secretary-General, or a greater concern.

GM I was in charge of the African Department during the

crisis, the latter part at any rate. The Congo crisis caused extreme irritation to the British government, at least the Conservative government at that time, particularly Douglas-Home, who felt that the UN had far exceeded their mandate in trying to suppress the independence of Katanga.

JS Do you see a line leading from Dag Hammarskjold in the Suez to Dag Hammarskjold in the Congo as far as British attitudes were concerned?

GM Not really, questionable to say the least.

JS Thank you very much.

## INDEX OF NAMES

UNITED NATIONS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT
ORAL HISTORY AGREEMENT

I, Guy Millard (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 James S. Sutterlin (Interviewer) on April 20, 1991 (Date) at Southrup (City), England (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.

Guy Millard
(Interviewee)

20 April 1991
(Date)

James S. Sutterlin
(Interviewer)

April 20, 1991
(Date)

(For the Institution of Social and Policy Studies)

(Date)