

United Nations Oral History Project

**Arthur Lall
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JK: For the record, Mr. Lall, what was your position and what role did you play at the UN during the 1956 Suez crisis?

Lall: As far as my position is concerned that is quite simple. I was Permanent Representative and Ambassador from India to the United Nations at that time. So far as the role I played that is a very complex question mainly because the Suez crisis, as you call this situation, was a long drawn out affair. It didn't suddenly burst on the scene one day and finish the next day, not at all. It went on for a long series of months, certainly, and in the earlier stages the crisis arose out of the fact that President Nasser had made that decree of his -- I think it was in June, 1956 -- nationalizing, not the Suez Canal as people loosely say. What was nationalized was the Suez Canal Company, the company which was running the Canal and its operations. It was that that he nationalized and not the Canal itself. The Canal itself, situated where it was, was very much in Egyptian territory and there was no question of nationalizing the Canal. So, the company was nationalized. About the first thing that happened after the nationalizing of the Canal company was that Anthony Eden, then the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, called a conference of the main users of the Canal in London at the level of foreign ministers. John Foster Dulles was there. Krishna Menon was there for India. I was there with him

and the others were the French foreign minister and the British foreign minister. Now, at that conference the delegation from India headed by Krishna Menon played a very prominent role.

JK: Was Krishna Menon the foreign minister?

Lall: In fact, he was the defense minister but for many of these purposes he acted as the foreign minister. Nehru was his own foreign minister as Prime Minister. He had delegated some aspects of the foreign minister's work to Krishna Menon. Krishna Menon was for all practical purposes on many occasions the foreign minister of India. We were there together in London for this conference. What the British wanted, what Eden wanted, and he was very worked up about this situation, was that the Egyptians should be forced into revoking the nationalization of the Suez Canal Company and to return it to the good hands of the French and British. This was just not on. There was no possibility of doing that. So, what India aimed at doing -- and I put it that way rather than what "I" did; Krishna Menon and myself were the people involved mainly -- was to make a formal proposal to that effect at the London conference. We were, I might say incidently, in close touch all the time with the Egyptians. They were not at the conference. They had not been invited to the conference. Maybe they were invited but they said, "no, we're not coming because

we are not interested in revoking the decree of the nationalization of the company. You have no business to interfere in this situation and so we are not coming." That was Nasser's position. But he sent a very senior advisor and cabinet minister of his, Ali Sabri, to London. And Ali Sabri was in our meeting room every morning at 8:00 with Krishna Menon and myself and one or two others. We were the only delegation that was in constant close touch with Nasser through Ali Sabri for the purposes of that conference's deliberations.

We persuaded the Egyptians to accept our proposal before we actually made it formally. We said, "why don't you agree." The proposal was based on the following argument: "why don't you, the Egyptians, agree to the formation of a users' council which would see to it that the Canal was being maintained properly and was well run." It wouldn't actually have a hand in doing the administrative work. It would be a very delicate operation. You couldn't really call it an oversight committee. But it would be a close liason with the users and the new management of the Canal. Now, the Egyptians after balking a bit at this accepted the idea that there should be such a council. So, this proposal was made by us at the London conference on the Suez Canal and was promptly rejected by Mr. Dulles. So, there was no chance of getting that through, unfortunately. We thought that

was very unfortunate. More and more it became clear that had it been accepted there would have been no further steps in the crisis. We hoped very much that the British particularly would agree to its creation because we thought Krishna Menon would be able to persuade them. But he wasn't able to do so. We thought that after all they might grumble about it and we would encourage them to grumble. By all means grumble about it and say you are not satisfied with it and it is not as much as we want but, all right, we'll see how this functions. They would not agree.

JK: Just to try it?

Lall: That's the trouble, They would not even agree to that step. There you get a case of the extreme unwisdom of leaders who feel they are being pushed into a crisis as Eden felt, certainly. Later, of course, it came out that he wasn't at all a well man. He was a sick man. That probably had a lot to do with it. Be that as it may, it seemed unnecessarily stubborn and arrogant, in a way, not to agree to this notion of letting the users' association now be an advisory council. He felt how can we who have run the Canal for the last one hundred years agree to take a backseat and simply be advisors to the Egyptians who don't know how to run this Canal at all. "Are we going to advise them? No, not on your life."

JK: Was that really the issue? Had there been any incidents

where the British had not been allowed freedom of passage?

Lall: No, no. It had nothing to do with that. Afterwards when there was the actual war then the Canal was blocked. But that was a good bit later. It seemed to us very clear that at that time a proposal like this which was not a very revolutionary proposal was minimalistic for the US and the British. The US was going along with Britain in this quite a lot. Britain was by far a bigger user of the Canal than the Americans. Anyway they didn't accept it and that led step by step to a mounting crisis. The British and the Americans and those that voted with them, we didn't, appointed the Australian prime minister or foreign minister to go and see Nasser and to tell him: "Look here, give up this notion of nationalization." Of course, they got nowhere, and the crisis mounted thereafter.

The next step in the crisis as I recall it was that Dag Hammarskjöld thought he would try his hand in stemming the tide, reversing the course of events which people could see were going in the wrong direction. He made a six point proposal about the Canal. I don't recollect those points in detail now but I do remember there were six points which he gave to Fawzi who was the foreign minister of Egypt. The people who were most closely in touch with the Egyptians in these matters

apart from Hammarskjold were myself and Krishna Menon when he was around. I was there all the time. So, I was in very close touch with Fawzi and his ambassador who was a close friend of mine, Omar Loutfi.

JK: This was in New York?

Lall: Yes, this was in New York at the UN. It seemed to me quite clear that the Egyptians would not be able to accept all six points that they involved too much control. At the most you might be able to take three of them. But Hammarskjold was very persistent. He thought he would get Fawzi to agree. The Hammarskjold technique was not being devious; that's not the right word, but going around an issue to get to it by some little crevice in the armor. Fawzi was a tremendous player of the same kind of technique, in this case which crevices would he find which could enable him in a gentlemanly way -- he was a very gentlemanly chap, Fawzi was -- to reject the proposals. So, it was an extraordinary game of Socrates, of linguistics and logic and persuasion in general by both these two men regarding the future of the Canal.

JK: Were the proposals something that would involve the UN in some way?

Lall: Yes, but it just didn't work. They were not seen as altogether workable proposals in spite of Hammarskjold's skill which was undaunting in trying to get them accepted.

JK: Was there an issue of nationalism or national pride involved in the Egyptian side of the issue?

Lall: When you come right down to it I think it was mainly economic. In the sense that after all the Canal made a lot of money and foreign exchange. The Egyptians were not going to give away foreign exchange. The Canal would give them a very big package of foreign exchange every year of its working. That is what they were after. That meant controlling the operations because those who controlled the operations would naturally claim part of the material benefits. Of course, national pride did come into the picture in the sense that when they found out that others were being stubborn about this notion which they thought was quite plain sailing in a way, they put their backs up. We could do some persuading which was not possible for others to do. And we did but, in the case of these six proposals we couldn't persuade the Egyptians because we didn't like the proposals ourselves.

JK: So, there was certain problem with credibility.

Lall: Yes, theoretically and in practice the Security Council was siezed with the issue in the end of September or the beginning of October, 1956. The Security Council was siezed with the issue and Hammarskjold was telling the Council, "yes, I am making headway with these proposals with the Egyptians," informing them that negotiations

were going on. The Security Council adjourned its proceedings so Hammarskjöld could continue with his efforts with the Egyptians. It was in that context, in that position of the crisis, that the British and French and Israelis attacked and resorted to the use of their forces.

Then came the war and the Canal was blocked. I don't know if you want to go into the war. I wasn't there. I was here. This I will tell you though. Suddenly I was awakened at about two in the morning by Omar Loutfi, the Egyptian Ambassador, saying, "a terrible thing has happened." I said, "what's happened?" He said, "the British and the French and the Israelis are attacking Egypt. They've launched an attack on us. What should we do?" At two o'clock in the morning you don't have your wits about you. So, we hastily got dressed and met. We called the Security Council at once. That was done. But something else was done which was against all probabilities. That was this. Nasser, with Tito and Nehru, was very keen on the non-aligned movement. And together they were more or less the founders of the movement. Nasser had a great regard and respect for Nehru because respect is part of the traditional approach in our part of the world for anyone that is older than you are. Nehru was considerably older than Nasser. So, there was not only regard but respect for Nehru. He was

very much a part of this non-aligned group. The non-aligned at that time particularly were very keen to avoid any semblance of requests for aid, military or otherwise, addressed to either of the major parties, the United States or the Soviet Union. It would be considered a criminal departure from the non-alignment to do such a thing. I said to Omar Loutfi, "look, all that is true but the only way we'll be able to stop this attack on Egypt is with the Americans. The Americans had I don't remember if it was the sixth or the seventh fleet in the Mediterranean. One of those two either six or seven was in the Mediterranean. I said, "what we should do now is make an immediate request to President Eisenhower to place the seventh fleet in such a manner that the British and the French warships carrying their forces would not be able to get to Egypt for reinforcements. Some had already gotten there. The war was on now. But to stop any more from coming.

JK: Eisenhower apparently did not support the British and French.

Lall: No, and I'll tell you what we did then. This is not in the books. No one knows these things. Naturally Hammarskjold didn't know these things either. Omar Loufti and I went to Henry Cabot Lodge. Together we went. Loufti checked this back with Nasser before he went. Loufti said, "we've come on behalf of President

Nasser to request you to interdict the passage of the British and French navies so no more reinforcements can come to that area and crush the Egyptian army." The actual request was conveyed straight away to President Eisenhower. I don't know what happened at that stage. Beyond that I don't know except that Cabot Lodge thanked us. He said, "I am much moved by this request you've made." He realized it meant a great stepping down from the position of non-alignment. Don't forget the Russians had already launched the Sputnik. So, the Egyptians had to bear in mind and so did we that we didn't want to offend the Russians either. God knows what else they had up their sleeve, you know. Those were the delicate aspects of the situation and they were very delicate. Therefore, knowing how delicate they were Lodge was very much moved by this appeal to President Eisenhower which he immediately conveyed personally. I don't know what effect that had, except that you could say a very few days later when the first emergency special session of the United Nations General Assembly was convened Dulles came and said, "I come here to say with a heavy heart that I have to oppose the actions of our allies in the Eastern Mediterranean."

JK: So, he openly opposed it.

Lall: He did openly oppose it. Whereas in the London conference a few months earlier he'd been very supportive

of them. Of course, that was before the war. He had been very supportive of the British and French position.

JK: On October 29th the Israelis attacked Egypt first and it was a couple of days later that the British began bombing the airfields and a couple of days after that the British and French paratroopers landed at Port Said. Was there any talk in the United Nations about what kind of collusion had gone on between the British, French, and Israelis or how it was orchestrated?

Lall: No one knew at the UN that there was this collusion. This was done very secretly by these three. Apparently so secretly that the Americans didn't know. That's my recollection that even they didn't know that this collusion was taking place. There was no talk on that subject. Then it came out, when it was a fact on the ground, as it were, that the Israeli attack had been followed by these two. The Israeli attack which took place immediately before the British attack was not regarded by Egypt as that much of a crisis. In the sense that it was expected. The trouble between Israel and the Arabs was an ongoing thing. So, that was expected. No one knew there was this collusion. It sort of sprang from the blue sky. The attack by the French and the British was a complete surprise.

JK: You mentioned the emergency special session of the

General Assembly. Why was this taken to the General Assembly? Why wasn't it handled by the Security Council?

Lall: I thought you knew that. That is well documented in the books. It was taken to the Security Council and the British and the French vetoed it. Both of them have a veto as permanent members of the Security Council. They vetoed the resolution calling for their withdrawal. I was there for all those Security Council meetings and Josua Brilej, the Yugoslav representative, was there. They were members of the Council. He was in very close contact with me about what should be done. He and I cooked up this notion that we would use the "uniting for peace resolution" to take the issue to the General Assembly. That had never been done before. This was the first time it was used. The move took everyone by surprise. I shouldn't say everyone because immediately before making this proposal Brilej told the Americans and the Russians at our suggestion and at the Egyptians' suggestion that this was what they would propose. When that proposal was made the Americans couldn't possibly say no because for one thing they had themselves sponsored the "uniting for peace resolution." The Russians were very doubtful about saying yes because they had always taken the position that the "uniting for peace resolution" was illegal, that it was not permissible under the Charter of the UN. It was taking away the

Charter rule that it is the Security Council which is responsible for international peace and security primarily, that you can't take these things away from the Security Council and give them to the General Assembly. They had to be persuaded not to raise that point. And I will say that to my surprise they fortunately didn't raise that point. They let it go to the General Assembly. That is how it came to be that the first emergency special session was called.

JK: Was it at that session that a resolution for a cease-fire was called for?

Lall: Yes, and for sending in a UN Emergency Force, the UNEF, which was the first clear case of a UN force being sent in on a peace-keeping mission. There had been UN observers in Kashmir but not a force in some strength and not to fight but to keep the peace. That had never been done.

JK: As you say there had been observers in different cases but this was the first time a peace-keeping force had been sent. Within a few days the UNEF arrived in Port Said.

Lall: Yes. The British said that they would not agree to leave and yield their positions to the Egyptians. So, they were finally persuaded. We said, "well, if you won't agree to that, won't you agree to leaving and letting the UNEF come in?" They agreed to that after a

good deal of foot dragging. It didn't happen in just a few days. I think it took almost a couple of weeks. The British felt very humiliated, they said. And they looked that way. I still remember Selwyn Lloyd's hang dog expression.

They finally did remove their forces because the UNEF proposal was in effect made by Mike Pearson, the then foreign minister of Canada. That led to another crisis because the UNEF came there and it cost a lot of money and the question was how to pay for the UNEF. The Russians and French said they wouldn't contribute to it. The Russians developed a debt and this was settled 20 years later when Arthur Goldberg was Permanent Representative by some kind of a little trick that was performed. To me an interesting thing is the following: that I proposed in the General Assembly that we shouldn't send in a new force. We shouldn't create a new organization but, we should use the UNTSO organization, the UN Truce Supervision Organization, already in situ there, created after the 1948 War as a result of the Armistice Agreements negotiated by Ralph Bunche. We should use that machinery and then all we would need to do was to increase somewhat the personnel of UNTSO to supervise the withdrawal of the British and French and that's it. That would have been much cheaper and would probably not have created the financial crisis that the

UNEF situation created.

JK: Why did they decide not to do that?

Lall: Well, because, you see, don't you understand why not? Because that proposal had been made by Canada, the foreign minister of Canada, and the foreign minister of Canada was supposed to be a much more acceptable person to the British than the Indian representative. Dulles accepted the proposal straight away as soon as it was made. My proposal was actually tabled as a draft resolution and it received more votes than the Canadian proposal. But still, there was something that I don't quite understand to this very minute except that the Canadian proposal was voted before mine, that's true. They were both voted on the same night but, the Canadian immediately before mine. They went ahead to implement the Canadian proposal whereas the other proposal simply to expand an existing organization by a little bit would have been much more practical. It would have created far less trouble and far fewer problems. But, they went ahead with that proposal. It could have avoided most of those expenses. Also, the Russians were contributors to UNTSO and they wouldn't have objected. No one would have objected.

You see, things don't get done rationally. All that one can say is thank God they get done even though they don't get done in the best way possible.

JK: That's why it is so interesting do do these interviews and get some of the background of how things actually do happen.

Lall: When it comes down to it things like prejudice and national prestige and so on become very important, very important. All countries suffer from these rough edges.

JK: After the UN Emergency Force landed in Port Said the Israelis did withdraw their forces from that area. But they were reluctant to withdraw their forces from Acaba and Sharm el Sheikh. How did the UN handle that situation with Israel?

Lall: There, informally the Egyptians said they would not move their forces into certain areas and that kind of thing. That's all. I say that's all but, of course, it was a delicate situation because the Egyptian national position was "why the devil shouldn't we move our forces into our own areas. How can you tell us not to do that." No one could tell them not to do it but they had to simply signify by their own actions that they weren't going to do that. And they did so.

JK: The Israelis, as I understand it, were concerned about freedom of passage through those areas.

Lall: Well, they never got complete freedom of passage, very unfortunately. They should have, I agree. That didn't happen then.

JK: So, the UN forces that were there still could not completely solve that problem.

Lall: Well, they greatly improved the situation in the sense that -- this is my recollection which is hazy and probably faulty to some extent -- that later the Israelis did get one ship to go through Sharm el Sheikh straits over there and nothing happened. No one fired at them. They did that as a demonstration really rather than showing that they were going to exercise the right to do so on a regular basis.

JK: How were the British brought around to agreeing to some kind of resolution?

Lall: They were brought around by the power of the United States and by the fact that Canada was also very persistent. They had proposed the Emergency Force. It was the pressure of North America but primarily the United States. Canada had a special kind of place in the British Commonwealth.

JK: What kind of role did the Soviet Union play in this? You've mentioned some of their attitudes. What Soviets were at the UN at the time?

Lall: Kuznetzov, Sobolev, and Gromyko. The real answer to your question is that immediately on the heels of this situation at the end of October was the Hungarian situation, simply two days later. A second United Nations emergency special session had to be convened to

deal with that issue, because the Russians vetoed the resolution in the Security Council on it. That was convened and the Russian focus was 99.9% on that issue and not on the Suez issue. They found themselves really pushed out of center stage on the Suez because the Hungarian crisis had suddenly broken. The two got sort of mixed up together in that sense.

JK: In your opinion did the French and British gain from the crisis they had created?

Lall: No, not in the least. The effect of it is no longer there now that we are a long time away from it. They certainly didn't gain anything, not at all. I think they would have gained if at the first London conference on the Suez Canal they had accepted the proposal of the users' council. They really would have gained but, they decided to reject it which I think was really very silly of them.

JK: In some ways the Israelis gained something from the outcome, in some increased freedom of passage and the UN troops being in the Sinai.

Lall: I would say that that was the major gain. Though the Israelis refused to let the UN Emergency Force function on Israeli territory so that it functioned only on Egyptian territory, they did gain from the presence of the UN forces. Of course, later they were able to say that what they gained was that when in 1967 Nasser told

U Thant to remove the Emergency Force he removed it. The Egyptians were marching right up to their frontier. That is another issue. I think personally that U Thant acted totally illegally in removing the Force. He had no right to remove the Force. The Force had not been sent there by the Secretary-General. It had been sent there by the General Assembly. When the General Assembly takes action the Secretary-General has no right to countermand the action or to say, "now I'm going to remove the force. It was perfectly absurd. Ralph Bunche and others completely misled U Thant. Brian Urquhart had no business to advise the Secretary-General to do that. That was a completely illegal action.

JK: What were their fears of leaving the forces there?

Lall: It is simply that when Nasser asked for the removal of the forces instead of saying, "all right, we'll remove the forces," U Thant should have firmly said to Nasser "Mr. President, I understand your position very well and your wishes must be complied with but, as you know the force was sent by the General Assembly. So, I had better convene an emergency special session of the General Assembly so that they might decide to withdraw the force and what to do about that." That's what should have been done. If that had been done in 1967 it is quite possible that there wouldn't have been any war.

JK: Do you think that the General Assembly would have

supported retaining the forces there?

Lall: No, the General Assembly would have realized and would have said from statements undoubtedly made by the Americans and the British and the French and many others that this is a grave crisis and this would lead to hostilities and so on. Therefore the crisis must be resolved and, "we call on both parties to hold their hands, to take no action now. Don't press for the removal of the force." Then the General Assembly would have requested the Secretary-General to negotiate with the Egyptians or to send a negotiator to the Egyptians to try and resolve the issue. That would have gained time and Nasser might have then come to his senses which he had temporarily lost. The whole thing could have been avoided.

JK: Had the forces been effective in terms of stopping the periodic fighting that had been going on and the raiding?

Lall: Yes, much more. Far fewer raids took place. There were no real raids actually but, fewer incursions took place.

JK: Was there any objection to the UN force in terms of its discipline or behavior?

Lall: No, they were very well behaved and very careful. All the arrangements for the deployment and the limitations on utilization had been carefully worked out in consultation with the Egyptians by the UN. In order for

that to happen the General Assembly appointed an advisory committee to function with Hammarskjold. There were seven people on that committee and I was one of them.

JK: This is at the time of the Suez crisis when the forces were being established.

Lall: Yes, for the establishment of the forces. Just to let you into another peculiarity and the unreality of situations, Hammarskjold, who was a curious man in many ways though a very able man, very intelligent said to us at the first meeting of this committee, about the verbatim records that we kept at the meetings of the committee: "these records are simply for your personal use. They're not for the use of your governments. You mustn't convey these to your governments. They are for your personal use." He must have been a completely naive person, -- and he had had little personal experience with diplomacy -- if he really thought that we would keep those minutes to ourselves and not send them to our governments. That was just impossible. Not only did we send them to our governments but, I gave a copy of those minutes everyday to Omar Loufti to send to Cairo. You see, I thought that was absolutely essential.

JK: What do you think was Hammarskjold's motive in asking you not to report them to your government?

Lall: He thought that it would give us a freer hand in discussing these issues and arriving at conclusions. He

didn't know that Omar Loufti and I every evening would discuss the meeting and come up with a joint agreement between the Egyptians and ourselves as to how to tackle the next day's meeting and what to say. Those meetings of that advisory committee I tell you quite truly were mostly a dialogue between Dag Hammarskjöld and Arthur Lall with all the other six members sitting silently. Sometimes Mike Pearson would say something. We were the only members of the committee in close touch with the Egyptians and they were the party immediately concerned with the deployment of the Force.

JK: What were some of the issues that the Egyptians were concerned about with the force?

Lall: To what extent would they actually use force, what kind of arms would they carry. The Egyptians were very keen to give a low profile to the force so they didn't stick out and look like an occupation force. That was the important thing, really, basically the most important thing.

JK: Were they concerned about what countries would be contributing to the force?

Lall: Oh, yes, they were.

JK: Again, so that it wouldn't look like an occupation force.

Lall: Exactly. The largest contingent was the Indian contingent. On the ground the largest contingent was the Indian contingent by far.

JK: They felt the most comfortable with the Indians.

Lall: Yes. Since then things have changed, as they always do. But that's what is was then.

JK: But they were reassured then.

Lall: They were reassured because all the arrangements made were made through me in consultation with them. While Dag Hammarskjold was naive enough to think that nothing like that was happening.

JK: That India was neutral and that he could deal in a neutral way with you?

Lall: Neutral, well, I don't know what he thought we were. He said he didn't know that there were these close collaborations between Omar Loufti and myself on these meetings.

JK: Who else attended those committee meetings?

Lall: What countries? Well, Canada, Columbia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka (Ceylan, as it was then). I forget the others.

JK: Were there others from the Secretariat?

Lall: The Secretariat contingent was Dag Hammarskjold, Ralph Bunche, Brian Urquhart, sitting right at the back being very silent, and Claude de Kemoulania, a Frenchmen, who later was ambassador to the UN.

JK: Did you have much contact with Ralph Bunche in these negotiations?

Lall: No, to tell you the truth, the contact which I had was with Dag Hammarskjold.

JK: Directly with Dag Hammarskjöld. Did you have much contact with Brian Urquhart?

Lall: He was not an operative factor in the situation at that stage.

JK: Being British?

Lall: No, being very, very junior. He was a very junior aid. He was absorbing what was going on, of course.

JK: Looking back at the situation were there any lessons that could be learned on how it was handled? What things were handled well and what things were not handled very well?

Lall: I think that the charitable view of the situation is that though it did lead to a war and a lot of suffering, it was not as badly handled as it might have been. For example, if the US had supported its allies the situation in the Middle East would have been much worse. That didn't happen. Also, as I said to you before, the policing of the withdrawal of the British and the French and the Israelis could have been done much less expensively and with less fanfare by expanding UNTSO and that wasn't done. So, that you could say was a mistake if you want to do these things better. But in the same breath to expect things to be done perfectly in a crisis situation is very unrealistic. The fact that this was a crisis situation might require that one define a crisis. A crisis is a situation in which the feathers of any of the states closely involved in the situation are so

ruffled that they are willing to go at the other party with all their force. That is what a crisis is in these kinds of situations. Now, that was the situation here. So far as the British and the French were concerned it was like that. So far as the Egyptians were concerned it was like that, too. So, it was a crisis situation and in such a situation it is very difficult to have things going in an ideal way.

JK: Well, that is all the questions I had prepared. We had been discussing informally your role in preparing the resolutions to encourage the French and British to leave Egypt after the cease-fire had been called for. Can you explain something about that?

Lall: Well, immediately after the Emergency Force resolution was adopted the first emergency special session and the ensuing regular eleventh session of the General Assembly adopted resolution after resolution calling upon the British and French and urging the British, French and Israelis to withdraw because there was no actual tangible movement of their forces out of that area though the Emergency Force was being set up. Those resolutions were introduced by me with the cosponsorship of others. Twelve, fifteen or twenty resolutions were adopted in quick succession urging the British, the French, and the Israelis to withdraw their forces because there was no tangible movement of their forces out of the area.

JK: What was your involvement with those resolutions?

Lall: My involvement in a sense was that those resolutions were presented by the Non-aligned Group, actually, and they were drafted by me and sponsored by a fairly large number of countries. I didn't want to be sticking out all over the place. They were all adopted with huge majorities with the United States voting for all those resolutions, because in the resolutions we deliberately and very carefully avoided any condemnation at all of the British, French, and the Israelis. We simply urged them to leave or called upon them to leave and that sort of thing. There was no condemnation at all.

JK: So, in your drafting of the resolutions you were very careful.

Lall: Very careful, and Cabot Lodge, whom I kept informed of all this and who saw the resolutions before hand and voted for them said to me, "this enables me to vote for the resolutions. Otherwise we would have to oppose the resolutions if you were to condemn the British and French."

JK: So, the Americans could vote for them then.

Lall: Yes, and I should add that many of the Arab countries were really annoyed with me. They wanted me to condemn the British and the French because they thought that at least an invasion should be condemned. And I was taking the position that condemnation has no place in diplomacy

at all and that you shouldn't condemn if you want to get results. So, I absolutely refused to condemn. Cabot knew that I was involved in that struggle of holding the line and he said that it was very statesmenlike and he was very glad. It did have an important effect because if the United States had not voted for those resolutions because they contained condemnation of their allies and friends the result might have been to throw the whole process into great chaos. It might have arrested the whole process of withdrawal because the British and French and Israelis would have said then, "well all right we are not withdrawing." The Americans would not have gone against them and we would have been stuck. We were able to get around that by this very careful action.

There was a rather amusing "contra temps" in regard to the next crisis which took place just a week later, the Hungarian crisis where the Americans as soon as the issue was brought to the second emergency special session on Hungary, immediately introduced a resolution condemning the Russian action. And Cabot Lodge came to me and said, "Arthur, we want you to co-sponsor this resolution." I looked at it and said, "Cabot, you are condemning the Russians straight away and you yourself told me how wise I was not to condemn the British and French and Israelis in the other crisis which we are also facing in the first of our emergency sessions of the

General Assembly. How do you expect me to sponsor this resolution when you told me I was wise not to condemn in the other?" He said, "but the British and French are not as bad people as the Russians. The Russians are much worse people. So, you should condemn them." I said, "well, I can see that you might feel they're much worse people but, lots of people would feel that the British and French have mounted this aggression from many thousands of miles away and that's equally bad. The whole point is that I don't think we should condemn these people straight away, just say leave. "No, you must leave." I'm all for their leaving. I'll co-sponsor a resolution asking them to leave without this condemnation. He said, "no we can't possibly do that. We must condemn them."

JK: The tables had turned. That was only a week or so later.
Lall: Now, the other matter that I was referring to a few moments ago when we were talking informally was the situation in New York when Hammarskjold was trying to get Fawzi to accept his six or seven points regarding the defusing of the Suez crisis. This was in October before the war broke out and the Security Council was siezed with the issue and had asked Dag Hammarskjold to continue his negotiations with the Egyptians. In that situation where he had been asked to continue with the negotiations we, by which I mean Krishna Menon and myself (I had

especially been very closely involved in the situation in New York and Krishna Menon had arrived from Delhi by this time) we went and saw Hammarskjold because we thought we had certain things to tell him which might be of some use to him in his negotiations with the Egyptians. So, we went to tell him these things and you know that he virtually refused to speak with us which was absolutely amazing, shocking and amazing.

JK: But he had been in touch with you at various times.

Lall: Oh, yes, very much so but, the point I'm making is that you should have seen his face and his attitude on that occasion. He really seemed to feel that he was on a superior plain, that he was appointed by God to resolve this crisis. Therefore, he had no need to talk to other mortals about it. He had this strain in him of feeling very close to God on various occasions which was fine by me. But he refused to talk! Very peculiar, very peculiar.

JK: He took a great personal involvement in this.

Lall: Yes, and then he let his vanity get the better of his good sense. That is what happened on that occasion. That's what happens to good people sometimes.

JK: Well, thank you.

Lall: You're welcome.

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