

United Nations Oral History Project

**Ernest Gross
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The Korean War

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JSS

Ambassador Gross I'm very grateful to you for having agreed to participate in this project. I would like to begin our session this morning which would be related to Korea and the Korean War, by asking you to describe exactly what your position was in the US Government at the time of the aggression in Korea.

GROSS

I'm very glad to be with you, Jim. I was appointed by President Truman to the US Mission to the UN as the Deputy Representative with the rank of ambassador and general authority to represent the United States in all the agencies of the UN. That was under a legislation that had recently been enacted setting up that position which hadn't existed before. I arrived in New York at the Mission in October 1949 and become engaged immediately in some of the current then pending activities, Kashmir and other hot spots, and then in June 1950 the biggest of all which was the Korean invasion, across the 38th parallel from the North.

JSS

Can I ask in that connection, there had been some incursions from the North by North Korean irregulars. Did the aggression, the full scale invasion, come as a major surprise to you and to the US Government?

GROSS It came as a terrible surprise in the sense that- the reason I qualify it is that there had been warnings just as you mentioned of some activities and some concentrations of troops, the North Korean forces, north of the 38th parallel and that really was why the UN Commission was there and able to report what was happening. It was there as a precautionary matter in order to report immediately which they did, and which made it possible - made it more likely - that we would not have any real trouble getting through a resolution.

JSS Now, at the time in June 1950, who were the major players on the American side and for that matter also on the UN side who were involved in dealing with and handling the Korean crisis?

GROSS On that night of June 25, or was it June 24 when I got the call from the State Department at midnight, I think it was, at that time the principal actors in Washington- the President was out of town-were the Secretary of State Dean Acheson, Jack Hickerson who had charge of the International Organizations Affairs Office, the UN Office, Dean Rusk who was Assistant Secretary for Far Eastern Division Affairs, and a couple of his assistants. There were two very active members of Hickerson's staff

one of whom was David Wainhouse. And on the US Mission front Ambassador Austin, who was my revered chief, was at his home in Vermont. I was in charge of the Mission at that point. My chief assistants were John Ross, Charles Noyes, James Hyde who was legal advisor to the Mission and our very important director of public information Porter McKeever and John McVain. I think Porter McKeever came later, John McVain- those were the principal actors.

JSS And on the UN side, the Secretariat side?

GROSS Abe Feller who was the brilliant Legal Advisor to the UN, very brilliant, upon whom Trygve Lie depended heavily, and Ralph Bunche, Andy Cordier - they were the principal figures working with Trygve Lie.

JSS And your initial contact as head of the US Mission was with the Secretary-General?

GROSS Yes, telephoned him, I think about three in the morning. to report that we had this information. I found that Hickerson - because I was at a dinner - Hickerson had already called him to advise him.

JSS Hickerson had been in direct touch with the Secretary-

General. So he knew. And What was the Secretary-General's attitude at this point?

GROSS Well, he responded at once to me, and Jack Hickerson later told me he had said the same thing to him, My God this is war against the United Nations. He used almost those exact words to me and I take it he said something almost similar to Hickerson. So it was at once a spontaneous, strong reaction. There was no persuasion on our part.

JSS In his memoirs Trygve Lie has suggested that in his view if the aggression in Korea was not met it would mean the end of the United Nations as the League of Nations had failed.

GROSS Yes, exactly so, and that was clearly his view. And it was the implication of his spontaneous remark when he heard the news and then repeated it when I called a couple of hours later. Incidentally, may I just add a lot of us felt the same way.

JSS Were there any differences on the American side in this respect?

GROSS Not that I was aware of at all. Quite the contrary. I

don't know, some of us like myself, being older than I should have been, remembered the League of Nations experience. I was studying in Geneva during the League days and I remember very well the League, the consequences for the League- the demise of the League because (among other causes) of failure to act with respect to the Italian aggression against Ethiopia, and the appeal of the Emperor Haile Selassie. Those things were very much in our minds actually.

JSS Because at the time not so many years had elapsed.

GROSS Not so many years had elapsed actually. Well within a person's lifetime.

JSS Right, Trygve Lie no doubt had still in mind the memory of Emperor Haile Selassie, as you say, appealing to the League.

GROSS Very possibly, although I don't remember his having said that but it's certainly was in my mind, for one.

JSS Now after the invasion there was a series of resolutions that were actually adopted quite quickly by the Security Council without too much difficulty except for the wording. Can you describe a little bit the difficulty

with regards to wording?

GROSS

It centered on our original draft which we had worked out with the Department. It was softened in the sense that it did not describe the North Korean act as an invasion or an aggression. And so that was the difference. I think there was a reason for that, not that there were doubts on the part of the members of the Council who attended a private session that took place during an intermission of the Security Council session that day. I had known from telephone conversations with virtually all members of the Security Council, whom I started to call about 1 am that night, to say that we were going to ask the Secretary-General to convene a session of the Council that day, June 25 at 2 pm, and to indicate what we proposed to do. They responded without any exception, that I recall, by expressing shock and dismay - not in the same terms as Trygve Lie had, but nonetheless, it was obvious and some of them obviously had been awakened-not a very studied reaction but spontaneous, emotional one, and therefore very true. Some of them would have difficulty getting instructions - the Indian, Yugoslav, Egyptian,-and there were others. Therefore the main problem that many of them had was to do what every diplomat hates to do, which is to make a decision like that at that moment without instructions. That made us- I'm speaking for nobody but

myself but I think I'm certainly not the only one in the Mission who felt that way - apprehensive because we really didn't want to have a delay on a resolution. It was really a question of my having some leeway. Because nobody was up there to give me instructions. I had to do things without instructions at the moment. When we started the meeting fortunately it struck me that it would be a good idea to invite the Republic of Korea representative who was sitting in the back of the Council chamber to the table. So, of course Malik wasn't there the Soviets weren't there, so the chairman invited the representative. There were no objections from the Council and that turned out to be very important, more important than I realized at the time. Trygve Lie opened it with a speech condemning the aggression; I followed with a speech condemning the invasion and tabled a resolution as they say in UN parlance. Really before it was discussed at any length at all I realized this was not the way to handle it tactically. So rather spontaneously - there was no way to communicate with Washington at that point although David Wainhouse, a great great scholar and wonderful person whom I had known in Oxford 20 years before, gave me solace, comfort and strength. I turned to him and I said Dave, What do you think? I think we perhaps should take this up in an executive session of the Council so that people can speak their piece without

too much of a show of disunity or doubt. He shook his head yes I like that idea. So I moved to recess. So we moved upstairs to a private room where we hammered out the few changes necessary. The only problem was the Yugoslav Permanent Representative wasn't there - he was out of contact, In the woods some where or in the mountains, so his deputy was really at a loss. And he said the only thing he could do - he didn't dare vote yes he didn't dare vote no- so he was the only abstention. So that was why that happened. I think that had the Yugoslav representative been there he wouldn't have had that same problem. So any way that was it. We agreed in the closed session and came back; there were a few speeches and then it was adopted and I reported immediately to Washington.

JSS

You mentioned the South Korean or the ROK Representative and this leads to a question I wanted to ask. In reading through the various memoirs of the period there are very few references to consultation with the South Korean Government or the South Korean Representatives. Was this true in New York.

GROSS

John M. Chang was his name and we became very good friends. I saw him a great deal and kept him advised as to what was going on. He was very much in the confidence

of the ROK Government. Later he became vice President of Korea. So that was the channel, as far as I know the only channel, although our Ambassador in Korea probably was talking with the President of the Republic of Korea, Syngman Rhee.

JSS That was John Muccio. But I think there was some sense in Washington that Syngman Rhee was a problem.

GROSS Well we never trusted Syngman Rhee. He was an authoritarian, dictatorial, irresponsible type; we all know it.

JSS Now did that make your task more difficult in New York in terms of the United Nations?

GROSS No.

JSS It did not?

GROSS I don't think so. Later it made it difficult when he did things in Korea during hostilities.

JSS Now you have mentioned the main characters in Washington and in New York. Can you describe a little bit the nature of the channel between Washington and New York. Sometimes in later years it's been suggested that the US Mission

was somewhat isolated from Washington.

GROSS When you say later years I'm not sure what you mean.

JSS After, long after Korea more in the 60's and 70's. But I did want to ask whether this was true at the time of Korea, whether the channels were totally open and whether there were full coordination between Washington and the Mission.

GROSS Well the first point yes, they were totally open. I think I must have been on the telephone three or four times a day. The flow of cables back and forth was enormous . The channels were wide open and I can't imagine a better group to deal with, more collegial, mutually respectful; Senator Austin - who must not be forgotten - his presence was very important. And also on another aspect his presence was important because of the respect in which he was held on the Hill where he'd been a distinguished Senator; and therefore although he was ill from time to time, as a result I found myself acting chief. Nonetheless I would never discount his authority or the importance of his wise counsel and steady purpose, wonderful character. Now I mention that because the spirit at the Mission was the spirit he instilled, not me. And it was very important to have that figure, that

influence. In Washington needless to say Acheson was, and Truman was highly respected to put it mildly. Dean Rusk had been an old friend from Pentagon days when he and I were in the Army and we worked together when I was in the Civil Affairs Division. He was in a class in operations at the War Department; we were very good friends then and always after that. Also Hickerson with whom I worked when I was in the Department before going to the UN. You see I was Assistant Secretary of State for Congressional Relations. I had license to roam the Department and if I didn't get to know everybody at the top that was my fault not their's. That was why I respected very much the people with whom we were dealing. I thought that the coordination and collegiality was first rate.

JSS

So to continue I wanted to go to the question of the relations, if any, with the Soviet Union at this time. The Soviets were not in the Security Council. But I believe United States did, in fact, send a note to the Soviet Union very quickly after the outbreak of war asking for Soviet assistance in ending the fighting. My question really is in the absence of the Soviet Union in the Security Council did you nonetheless have contacts with the Soviet Representatives with regard to Korea.

GROSS

Contact was a good way to put it whenever we found

ourselves at a dinner or reception, the hostess would always seat us next to each other. If we met at a cocktail party we were expected to talk. The atmosphere was a bit strained in that sense. But the fact was Ambassador Malik and I got along very well. Personally he was a genial fellow. Maybe not to his own staff I don't know. But certainly in our relationship and I'm sure in his relationships with others. We talked about Korea a lot but it was always the same strain . Why did you Americans invade North Korea? That was the line and that is what he expounded. So I didn't feel that there was any future in that. Nonetheless we maintained a warm if not affectionate-at least a cordial atmosphere between us. Sometimes I think that stood us in good stead because there were straws in the wind occasionally. This jumps ahead of the story but I didn't predict the tail end of that radio speech in which he suggested a ceasefire but I reported to the Department at one point, I think I phoned actually, that I had talked with him the night before and I said don't be surprised if they make a move.

JSS And this is Ambassador Malik your speaking of.

GROSS Ambassador Malik. I felt that- payoff is too strong a word- that it was the thing to do anyway. I was there not to vent my own personal feelings on anybody so there was

a relationship. Cables to the Department time after time reported my conversations with Malik. And some of his people Zinchenko, and other Russians who came - Gromyko but he was impossible to talk to, he was very curt and I think he also felt that my lack of authority was such that it wasn't worth while talking seriously with me.

JSS Now you mention Zinchenko and Zinchenko at that point was, I believe, the Assistant-Secretary-General for Security Council Affairs. Did that pose a problem, having a Russian as the Assistant- Secretary-General?

GROSS Well that's one reason I mentioned Zinchenko. I felt there was a conflict of interest between the article of the Charter that calls for, rather than merely suggests, an effective international civil service in terms of loyalty to the Organization not at the expense of his nationality but in the sense of maintaining the integrity of your position. I felt a little strange in talking with him because frequently it was with Malik alongside.

JSS But even while the Soviets were not participating in the Security Council Zivchenko was no doubt there because as the Assistant-Secretary-General...

GROSS Oh yes, we would meet. I looked at just a couple of

reports before this to refresh my recollection. That conversation at dinner where we went off to a table in the restaurant in the hotel, Zivchenko, Malik and myself - the three of us talked at great length.

JSS Another question with regard to the Secretariat: Zivchenko was the Assistant- Secretary-General but I believe the Director of the Security Council Division at that point was a man named Dragon Protitch. I know almost all of the UN reporting from Korea came to Protitch first rather than to the Secretary General or to Zivchenko and I wondered whether this was a channel which you used in the Mission in dealing with the Secretariat on Security Council matters.

GROSS Well I had total confidence in him; we became very close friends; we still see his widow Mimi Protitch who retired long since to a beautiful place up on a lake in New Hampshire but he was not a principal contact at the UN. Trygve Lie was the principal contact.

JSS I'd like to go ahead now. You mentioned earlier the establishment of the UN Commission which was in Korea at the time of the outbreak of hostilities.

GROSS That had been set up in 1947.

JSS And had been there when the elections took place in South Korea. What was the impression on the American side of the functioning of this Commission in Korea.

GROSS How they functioned or what their function was?

JSS What their function was I think is clear from the records, but how they functioned; whether your impression was that they were objective and effective in their work?

GROSS yes, I think without doubt they were. The members of that Commission as far as I recall were without exception very dedicated to their work. They were very aware of their responsibility and very anxious to further the UN resolutions on the subject for a free and independent Korea. That was their task and they went about it in a very serious way.

JSS Now moving ahead a little bit, fairly early in the consideration of the Korean crisis the question of the US policy on Formosa as it was at then called came up and I believe that there was a Soviet effort to introduce a resolution in the Security Council criticizing the US policy. I wonder if you could comment on the extent to

which this somewhat separate question affected the handling of the Korean question in the United Nations and gave you problems.

GROSS

Well I guess the main problem was the break in the circuit- was the fact that the really responsible government of China was not in the UN and that, of course, is an historic fact. The representative of what we call the Nationalist government was T.S. Tingt and again I sound as if I loved everybody but he and I were very good friends too, I like to think, and saw each other frequently. I admired him very much . And as a somewhat older man he used to admonish me that the Americans were very impatient people and we should develop a little better sense of history than we had. He had been an historian on the Mainland and he was really a very first-rate person. He understood the [inaudible] of his position as well as anybody else. Very loyal to Taiwan, he thought very much of his boss, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-Shek, but that's another point. But from our point of view in response to your question I think it was a factor which entered into the immediate response to the invasion in Korea, because of the immediate fear, almost expectation, that Taiwan would be quickly invaded by China. We assumed that it was the Soviets who had mounted and staged the invasion for the North but of course at

that time we all thought there was a communist, monolithic international conspiracy and that anything that happened, one arm was Soviet and one arm was China. We'd know what it was the beginning of - what the portent was. That was very real, the anomalous position of Taiwan. This is why one of the first acts that the President did was to send the 7th Fleet, I think it was 7th fleet, into the Formosa Straits to protect the island from invasion. Well that entered into the insistence of the Russians that the Security Council was illegal without the Government of the Peoples Republic of China and that Taiwan represented just a Kuomintang clique - this was the word they always used. The walkout on the Chinese representation issue was the reason for the absence of the Soviet delegate on June 25. We adopted a resolution. So that really tied in very definitely.

JSS

I'd like to ask a question in that regard. As you say there was a general assumption on the American side that the Soviet Union was the originator and organizer of the North Korean attack. Two questions: first in the light of ensuing years is that still your view, and secondly did anyone at the time wonder why the Soviet Union had chosen that time to be absent from the Security Council if in fact it knew about the North Korean action?

GROSS Well I don't quite understand the latter point.

JSS Did anyone wonder at the time why, if the Soviet Union had mounted the attack why then it chose to be absent from the Security Council just at that point?

GROSS Well looking back, I read Gromyko's memoirs the other day and there was a problem, he says, of whether or not the Soviet representative should be in the Council. Gromyko says, as I recall, that Stalin personally made the decision. So I don't know what Stalin's reasoning was that is what Gromyko's report is. I didn't know anything about that, none of us did. No, so that 's about as far as I can go on that question.

JSS Right. It's always struck me as interesting that they were absent at the very time.

GROSS Well you will have to ask Stalin that one if Gromyko's report is correct.

JSS Now I want to go ahead to one of the major developments of UN history related to the Korean experience and that is the introduction and adoption of the Uniting for Peace Resolution in the General Assembly. Could you give such

information as you have as to the drafting of that resolution and as to the realistic expectations on the American side as to what it would accomplish.

GROSS

Yes, I was quite involved with that in the fall and winter of 1950. Basically, I think, speaking for myself, the idea behind it was to, in a sense, sanctify the General Assembly, given the fact that the Security Council was veto-bound by the return of the Soviet representative. He assumed the Presidency of the Council on Aug 1, 1950 according to the monthly rotation of the presidency. General Assembly rules and procedures needed to be drycleaned a little bit. The provision for an emergency special session convening on shorter notice than existing rules permitted. As far as the Peace Observation Commission was concerned we looked for a more active role than turned out to be the case. The President appointed me the first US Representative on the Peace Observation Commission and that gave me a kind of vested interest in seeing it do something. But apart from the early functioning in the Balkan situation it really went into desuetude. The Collective Measures Committee had a better early existence and made a very good report. Our working representative on that was Harding Bancroft. He was from the International Organization Division of the Department -did a beautiful job in the Collective

Measures Committee report which I think is still a valid although neglected document. I really think that it should be republished now and examined by governments because it is very thoughtful in terms of suggesting how preparations can be made in advance of crises. So I think that the Collective Measures Committee was the big thrust forward although I'm afraid that that has become neglected. The change of the rules of procedures I didn't regard as world shaking because the General Assembly could always change its rules of procedure. It adopts them, therefore it can change them. So you didn't need the Uniting for Peace resolution with all the fanfare to amend the rules of procedures of the General Assembly.

JSS Now this resolution is sometimes referred to as the Acheson resolution but I judge from what you are saying that some of the ideas at least came from you and the Mission in New York.

GROSS Oh, yes. I don't think Acheson would claim sole authorship. Dulles had a lot to do with it.

JSS I was going to ask you that because there are indications that John Foster Dulles also participated.

GROSS Very much so. He was a leading delegate. I was also, in

addition to my other duties, a US delegate to the General Assembly session in 1950. I attended five actually, but 1950 was one of them. As a member of the delegation I knew who was doing what. Dulles was very active on that and other members of the delegation were, too .

JSS Now was there any real expectation that the General Assembly could replace the Security Council in taking action in preserving international security.

GROSS Well you know it's a very interesting question, Jim. I've always been a lawyer basically, but I have always been a little unlegalistic about the difference between a recommendation and an order. I think some recommendations have more moral force and influence than many orders. So I never thought that the rather legalistic distinction between Chapter 7 of the Charter and Chapter 6 of the Charter in the event would prove all that important. This is not to say that there is no difference by any means but the fact was that we went into Korea on the basis of a recommendation by the Security Council not an order. I should revert to that perhaps because one of the formulations which was devised - I don't know who devised it I don't think I did but it doesn't matter-the formulation " calls upon" the Security Council" calls upon", we didn't wasn't to invoke Chapter 7 at the time

of the Korean invasion; we didn't want to be under any enforcement order. We wanted to have options so we preferred a recommendation and "calls for" was an equivocal statement somewhere between an order and a recommendation. So that was really why I thought at the time, and still think, that formulation was wise and that became sort of standard as I remember.

JSS

Going back then to the Uniting for Peace resolution in the General Assembly, there was subsequently a resolution adopted in the General Assembly which called for sanctions against the Peoples Republic of China after their invasion. This did not have the force of a Security Council resolution.

GROSS

Well, of course I don't think a Security Council resolution would have had any more force. That was my point because it would have been in the same form. That's another long story. That really left it up to Member States to decide what to do, what measure to take to carry out this embargo on strategic materials because that's all it covered, petroleum and military items. It wasn't a general embargo. We called them additional measures because it was additional military measures, that is to say strategic or war measures additional to the military action. Not different but additional. So it

wasn't an economic sanction. I remember how that came up one day in one of our staff discussions. One of our bright boys suggested that. I think it was James Hyde.

JSS I see, sanctions would have had to be under Chapter 7. Certainly the Uniting for Peace Resolution has not only remained on the books it has been used frequently in subsequent years and was important at the time of the Suez War.

GROSS I wish the Peace Observation Commission would be revitalized.

JSS Yes well many people do not realize what was in that resolution.

GROSS I've always felt that's right and having been our representative, I felt a little bit let down.

JSS I want to go ahead now with the question of General MacArthur who was the commander of the UN forces. What were his relations, if any, directly with United Nations Headquarters in New York and with the Secretary-General. Did he report at all to the Secretary-General or the Security Council or General Assembly?

GROSS Yes, he reported from Olympus, the usual Olympian

relationship that MacArthur had with just about everybody. So back and forth, no.

JSS Trygve Lie had no direct relationship.

GROSS I don't think so. I never heard of any.

JSS Now just about this time perhaps a little later Dean Acheson has made the comment that the troubled relationship between Washington and General MacArthur was being reflected in New York and endangering the rather precarious stability that existed in the UN.

GROSS Stability of what?

JSS Precarious stability of support for the whole UN action in Korea. And his suggestion was that the troubled relationship with MacArthur, between Washington and MacArthur was being reflected in New York already among the delegations and making them more nervous about the whole operation. Was that your impression?

GROSS Yes, I think I'd add a footnote to that. Dean Rusk, as Assistant Secretary far Eastern Affairs, and a very active figure, a brilliant figure, I was told regularly briefed a group in Washington, representatives of

Members who had forces or who were participating in one form or another in the action in Korea. There were quite a few who were contributing services other than soldiers. We knew about that, of course. But we never had any information about his briefings. That was one aspect that I felt a little puzzled about actually. There was a little bit of break in the circuit there. Maybe I should have qualified my original statement about total collegiality and collaboration because we never knew what he was saying to them, what the discussions were, if any, about MacArthur. That would be the place where I should think that they would sound off. I don't know if there are any records of that anywhere. It's a big blank to me and seems to me might provide a key to the kind of question you just raised. As far as we were concerned, we being the generality of the unwashed up at the UN, well, MacArthur was, as I say, just a kind of an Olympian figure who was pretty well running the show and perhaps running a little wild but certainly he wasn't paying any attention to the UN and I don't think he paid much attention to the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Or maybe we should say it the other way around. They just let him do pretty much what he wanted. Even General Marshall was running as fast as possible to catch up with MacArthur it seemed to me from time to time. That may be unfair but that what the records seem to show. So MacArthur and the

United Nations were not in the same ball park, really.

JSS Now at this point was the UN Commission, which was still in Korea I believe, was it reporting to New York on the conduct of the war?

GROSS No, I never saw any report of that sort.

JSS So in fact the delegates and even the Secretariat were largely dependent on press reports as to what was happening in Korea.

GROSS No, because we were getting reports from our embassy.

JSS Which you were giving to the other delegates. You were briefing them. To move ahead now to October, this is when the General Assembly passed a resolution calling for the establishment of a unified, independent, democratic government of all Korea.

GROSS That was resolution number 376 of October 7th.

JSS Now this resolution was variously interpreted especially by General MacArthur. What was your interpretation of this resolution with regard to military action north of the 38th parallel?

GROSS

My clear impression at the time and since was and is that it was one of those documents which was built on a calculated ambiguity. There was no way to get through a resolution that stated flatly that he was free or prohibited from crossing the 38th parallel. From the United States standpoint, and particularly from the military standpoint- we were constantly in touch with the Joint Chiefs through our Military Staff Committee in New York that was unheard of in military lore. But tradition has it that when you are chasing an army that's in retreat you don't just stop because there's an imaginary line somewhere. You pursue it to destruction if you can, or otherwise it mobilizes and comes back at you. I mean that's just the common sense of military tradition. In this case you had, it seems to me, you had a conflict in a sense between the political and military realities. It was foreseeable that the problem would arise with respect to that very point if and when the Korean forces retreated north of the 38th parallel in flight and presumably for reordering their ranks or whatever. So from the military point of view the 38th parallel was clearly a juridical concept and really had no military relevance. That was the impression I had. I believe that entered into our minds. Certainly some of us were discussing the resolution of Oct 7th. The ambiguity

was, as I say, a calculated one with the expectation that the military realities would dictate the events.

That was the political, if you like, lubrication for the military action. But to proscribe any military movement north of the 38th parallel is a different question. That was a military question; the other was the ultimate political objective . And the ceasefire group got hung up on that. We have to get to that pretty soon because it is relevant. We received at the Mission a top secret telegram on Dec 20th 1950. I'd like to read portion of it. It was really an instruction to us which meant, since I was handling the thing, to me. This is in December 20 after the Chinese intervention so it's not directly responsive to your question except that it is a consequence of that interpretation of the Oct 7th resolution and the military realities as they were perceived in the theater.

"In view of the undeniably heightened danger of general war" (this is the Secretary's message to me)" we should overlook no honorable possibility of bringing about a peaceful settlement in Korea. We believe it therefore wise not to become overly entangled in the procedural maze into which our ceasefire and other proposal have developed and to take stock of our basic purposes.

1. The reason for UN action in Korea was to repel North Korean aggression against the Republic of Korea. There has now been added the aggression of China. If the free world is to survive we cannot voluntarily permit aggression to be rewarded. On this point we will not compromise or bargain.

2. Our objective in Korea has never varied from that of the UN resolutions: the establishment of a unified, independent and democratic country. We had hoped and still hope to bring that about by peaceful means under United Nations procedures. Neither we, nor the United Nations, were committed to bring that about by whatever force would be required. The enemy is now in fact capable of preventing a UN military success in all Korea.

3. We have consistently desired and still desire the earliest possible withdrawal of UN forces from Korea. This must as a minimum be accompanied by a cessation of North Korean attacks across the 38th parallel and withdrawal of Chinese forces. It is our earnest desire that the Entezam group, (that was the cease- fire group that I was in constant touch with), will be successful in arranging a cease- fire which could lead to a generally acceptable peaceful settlement for Korea, including acceptance by Korea's neighbors. To this end we are

willing to discuss the matter in a form or procedure which would include the Chinese communists. Despite undoubted basic differences in ultimate purposes there may at least be room for discussion leading to a modus vivendi. If they are as they have stated, interested in cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of foreign forces from Korea, then some accommodation might be possible and we should be able to discuss a peaceful settlement. The holding of such discussions should not depend upon prior commitments from either side as to positions to be taken and discussion, itself, does not constitute appeasement. Therefore if our friends in the UN including Entezam, Pearson and Rau (Entezam was the Iranian, Pearson the Canadian, Rau the Indian the three of them composing the ceasefire group) and the Chinese communists understand our basic willingness to talk and use peaceful methods they may be able to work out a situation to bring this about. We have immediately in mind a cessation of hostilities with the military situation stabilized at the 38th parallel. We believe an effort to achieve this prior to any communist offensive across the parallel is of great importance. We suggest that you use the foregoing as a basis for discussions with Rau, Entezam and Pearson."

JSS

That then brings us right to the question of your

relations with the Ceasefire Committee because already in December they did propose I believe a ceasefire, establishment of a demilitarized zone with the 38th parallel as its southern border which is rather close to your instructions. Can you explain how the discussions with the group took place.

Did you use these instructions as a basis for the discussions?

GROSS Oh yes, and indeed I reported back.

JSS If we could just continue on this. The US side then had confidence in the activities of the Ceasefire Committee. You had confidence in what they were trying to do.

GROSS We had confidence in the individuals as individuals. Speaking for myself I don't think we had much confidence that they were going to get very far, given the fact that the Chinese were not paying any attention to their approaches.

JSS But the effort to achieve a ceasefire at this point was in accordance with US objectives.

GROSS Yes, This December 20th message from the Department, instruction if you like, was the last waltz with the

Ceasefire Committee as it turned out. Because within less than two weeks about two weeks we reported that the ceasefire initiative group had failed. So we started to look for different formulas without success.

JSS At this point did the position of the British and others on the recognition of the Peoples Republic of China have a major influence on the prospects of resolution drafting?

GROSS You mean in terms of results? No, actually Jebb* said, and in my recollection, repeats in his memoirs, that they were supporting the US decision although they felt we were making a terrible mistake in opposing the seating of Communist China in the UN, that the British felt that we would gain more than we would loose by having that contact with them. He said at the same time that although the British had been quick to recognize the Chinese Communist Government, they never had more than a chargé in Beijing. The Chinese would never exchange ambassadors. So they were sending a signal to the British that in effect they couldn't normalize relations with the closest ally of the US while the US was opposing their admission to the Security Council.

JSS Now from the telegram that you read from the Department

it's clear that the United States was not totally opposed to the participation of the Peoples Republic of China in some form.

GROSS You see we were playing the same kind of confused game. We didn't want them in the UN for political reasons; at the same time, as the message said, we'd talk with them - any time, any place. Well you know when you say any form I interpret that to mean in the UN. It wasn't qualified. I don't know if the drafter of this cable realized that implication. Of course this was a top secret message.

JSS And it was just at this point I believe that Chinese - General Wu - did, in fact, arrive in New York. But there was no contact with him?

GROSS Well to make a speech. Trygve Lie tried to arrange it. I was in constant touch with Lie on that. But no, they weren't interested in contact.

JSS But you would have felt authorized to have contact with him.

GROSS I told Lie a number of times that if he could arrange it that was to be expected, hoped. We thought at first that that might have been the reason for Wu's coming. Rau was

also pressing. The joke at that time was that Rau, who was the Indian representative, that Rau Wued and Wu Raued. You probably heard it,

JSS Now there were a number of private initiatives in addition to the work of to the ceasefire group, I believe the Indians, perhaps the British. Were you aware during this period of efforts on the part of individual countries to arrange some kind of an ending to the war?

GROSS Well India was very active. Panikkar was the Indian ambassador to the UN Beijing and Rau very frequently told us about Panikkar's messages to Nehru. Panikkar was firmly convinced, he reported to Nehru, (Rau was very frank about this - a very open wonderful fellow in terms of honesty and purpose and modesty but strong willed just the same) - Panikkar considered the Chinese government to be not a typical communist regime. Rau at one point said in a conversation which I reported to the Department so they got the feel of the Rau, Panikkar, Nehru thing, Panikkar felt that we misjudged the Chinese communist government; that their policies were not like Stalin's. They were not similar. He didn't think there was a monolithic rapport between Russia and China and thought that we were making a mistake in not having some kind of rapport or at least contact. Now that I think of it it's

a bit like President Bush and his attitude toward keeping contact with Beijing. There was no contact except through the Ceasefire Group, as far as I'm aware. I never heard of any contact. Panikkar's influence with Nehru was that we should really be more open and not continue to obdurately block..... I told Rau one day that my instructions, when I came up to the UN, were that we were to balance what was called a knife-blade neutrality with respect to the question of admission of China. That we were not going to veto, we would not veto if the majority of the Security Council voted for admission. We were careful in discussions not to twist their arms, although the public declamations were always "not over our dead bodies." But there was a tremendous gap between the declaration policy, the rhetoric, and the knife-blade neutrality. Afterwards it came as a surprise to many of my friends and colleagues when I told them about that. And that would have come about. It's a little off the point but that would have come about - the majority- but for France. Because the French began to be, as I understood from Chauvel, worried about Chinese intervention and trouble- making in Indo-China. Colonial policy was getting in the way of objectivity on the part of the French. And the French at one point were the swing vote. We would not have vetoed.

JSS And that would have been a recommendation for the Peoples Republic of China.

GROSS That would have been a vote to admit them.

JSS That's very very relevant, indeed, and I would like to pursue it a little bit because I have read I believe in the Acheson memoirs or the Truman memoirs that at least as the war proceeded Secretary Acheson took the position that the United States would not under any circumstances concur in the seating of the Peoples Republic because this would be rewarding the aggressor. Was that reflected then later in telegrams?

GROSS Well no; as I say, I don't want to say my old distinguished friend and boss Acheson was making one kind of speech and doing something else behind the curtain. Not at all. I think he probably felt the way he spoke. But I would like to read you again this message of December 20th. This is the key sentence: " It is our earnest desire that the Ceasefire Group will be able to arrange an acceptable peaceful settlement. To this end we are willing to discuss the matter in a form or procedure which would include the Chinese Communists". Well I mean the form obviously had to be the UN from the stand point of logic. The Cease- Fire Group was a UN

group.

JSS That puts a new dimension on that. I have not heard of the role of France for example at this point.

GROSS That's what I was told by Chauvel.

JSS We have a situation where the Chinese have invaded in some force.

GROSS As they had warned.

JSS As they had warned they would do, yes, A warning which I believe came through several sources. Is that correct?

Gross It came from Chou En-Lai to Panikkar as I recall and I think the Joint Chiefs must have credited it to some extent because on Sept 27 the Joint Chiefs of Staff sent instructions to MacArthur" your military objective is the destruction of the North Korean armed forces. In obtaining this objective you are authorized to conduct military operations including amphibious and airborne landings or ground operations north of the 38th parallel in Korea provided that at the time of such operations there has been no entry into North Korea by major Soviet or Chinese communist forces, no announcement of intended

entry, nor a threat to counter your operations militarily in North Korea. Under no circumstances, however, will your forces cross the Manchurian or the USSR borders of Korea and, as a matter of policy, no non-Korean ground forces will be used in the northeast provinces bordering the Soviet Union or in the area along the Manchurian border. Furthermore support of your operations north or south of the 38th parallel will not include air or naval operations against Manchuria or against USSR territory." That's quoted from the Joint Chief of Staff. You see that's related to your question because there was an announcement of intended entry unless the Joint Chiefs were quibbling and thinking of a formal pronunciamento. This certainly was a threat to counter our military operations you see. This is why I always felt the Joint Chiefs of Staff failed to follow up their own instructions. I think what happened was that MacArthur's action was acquiesced in by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, that they decided for whatever reason that ok, if he thinks it's necessary, let him do it. That was really what the situation was.

JSS

Now when the Chinese did, in fact, invade what was the reaction in New York among the delegations? Was there a panic, a feeling of the battle had been lost now? Or was there an acceptance ?

GROSS

Well, let me just answer that two ways. Jebb and I were very close at that time. He says this. May I read this he refers to me here." In New York there is formed the best possible basis for Anglo-American cooperation, absolute personal confidence between the men and the job, as soon we were to need. I shall never forget the night when Ernie came round to see me at Essex House with the terrible news of the route of the 8th army by the Chinese, the impending threat to the 10th army on the northwestern flank. It was obvious that there could be a danger that British public opinion would attack MacArthur and the American policy of the non-recognition of Communist China and the Americans might tell the British that it was all partly their fault for not having sent enough troops." And so forth it goes on from there. That was not an untypical reaction. I had the feeling at that time when I reported to the delegations on the Security Council what had happened that their reaction was similar in certain respects to the reaction when I told them of the invasion of the North Korean forces. I couldn't help feeling that. I wouldn't say panic. There was alarm in both instances, alarm would be a better word than panic. What occurs to me is that in Washington there was something that might be called a little more than alarm because the forces were being chewed up. I think it

was on the day after the route of the 8th Army when Austin and I were summoned to Washington. We met in Acheson's office with Rusk and Hickerson, I think, and a couple of generals, I forget who they were but top people from the Joint Chiefs of Staff with maps. It was a kind of situation room, but it was the Secretary's conference room, not his office, next door to his office, and they outlined for Austin and me what was happening there. I remember one of the generals said this was the first time in recorded military history that we were aware of that two large forces on the offensive ran into each other and the result was total disaster. The UN forces were really being chewed up. So the reason for summoning us was to tell us to start thinking in terms of a cease-fire. It was urgent. That led to me being instructed or Austin but Austin left it pretty much to me. He was always watching and always wisely advising but nonetheless wouldn't be acting. I was looked to to establish whether or not New York or just where, what forum if any

JSS To seek a ceaseure you mean?

GROSS Yes, there was no response in New York. And so it was obvious that Stalin wanted it handled in Moscow and I was relieved. I think that Acheson had forgotten about that

because he mentions in his memoirs the fact that we tried to negotiate in New York but that it was an amateur approach. Actually it was not an attempt to negotiate in my mind but to find out where they wanted to negotiate so that I could report back. Acheson obviously had forgotten that.

JSS Eventually the front was stabilized in the summer and at this point I believe the Secretary-General took the initiative in proposing a purely military ceasefire to be negotiated by the military commanders. Do you recall whether this was Trygve Lie's idea or whether it was something you had discussed with him?

GROSS No, I hadn't been involved in that.

JSS In fact that's what eventually happened. So it seems to have originated with the Secretary-General.

GROSS Well as far as I know . But that's my own lack of knowledge on the subject.

JSS This produced about the same time a fairly positive response in the broadcast by Malik to which you have referred. Did you attribute significance to the Malik? broadcast.

GROSS Oh yes. It was a signal, a clear signal.

JSS And how was this followed up on the American side ?

GROSS By continued exploration of where they wanted to explore it. That's when specifically Mr. Tom Kory who was the Russian speaking member and Sovietologist at the Mission - I had him call the Soviet delegation to really in effect find out whether Malik wanted to talk to us. And we got no response. Then at a Security Council dinner - at that time they had monthly dinners - a big picture was taken of Malik and Jebb and myself - all of us wearing white dinner jackets. I think it was some time later, somebody, one of the reporters, said to me it's good to see you smiling at each other. So I said well we've been out of touch for a long time. Malik obviously got the point but the Soviet government clearly wanted to handle the problem in Moscow and I think rightly so. My recollection is that George Kennan was sent over.

JSS Yes I believe Kennan had two conversations in May and June in Moscow.

GROSS In Moscow our Ambassador was Admiral Kirk, if I remember So that was the right forum for this because everything at that point had to be done with Gromyko and Stalin.

Malik couldn't handle it in New York. It was impossible. It was naive to think that but we left the door open in case they wanted to. You see we had in mind the Malik-Jessup talks[on Berlin] that had been in the UN setting and we thought if they wanted to do that, ok. But I didn't expect too much, never did.

JSS It's your impression then the agreement on the part of the military leaders in the North to talks which I think was on July 10, that this did reflect the Soviet signal and the conversations.

GROSS Yes, I think that's a very good field for speculation, why it was the Chinese were fighting and the Russians made the speech, made the proposal- Just what the relationship was. May I speculate for a moment? Because having been rather intimately exposed to that from the beginning from June 25 on, I began to wonder, and I tried to sound Malik out on this in a delicate way from time to time. I began to wonder whether assuming that the Soviets had staged, mounted the North Korean [offensive], had certainly staged the forces, there's no doubt about that, whether the Soviet Union was not trying to establish a kind of "place d'armes" - Korea flanking the Soviet Union on that side. I remember one day T.S. Tsiang said to me you know I have been representing the Chinese Nationalist

government for some years, we've been good friends, I'm no communist, as you know but he said I will say this: that if you take a long view of history it might be shorter than we think. The Soviet Union and China will turn against each other when they feel they cannot, with profit, gain anything more than by moving in opposite directions. I was impressed by that. I said I was going to report this to the State Department. But then I said what do you think T.S., that the Chinese approved, were enthusiastic about the Soviet staging of the North Korean aggression. He said no they couldn't have approved of it. It wouldn't profit China in any way. In fact it represented a possible threat. I said then do you think when the Chinese invaded Korea that they were fearful that it would come under the US hegemony that another danger would be substituted for the [Soviet] danger on their flank. He said yes, I think so. And I said that leads to the next question did the Chinese invasion then seek not only to drive out the UN forces, but also to extirpate the Soviet influence there and create a Chinese zone with both the American and Russian hegemonies was removed. He said I think so. So we worked out our little formulation there, and I believe myself largely from the influence of Tsiang that that was the story, and the real background but that's pure speculation. But nonetheless I haven't come across anything to shake that.

JSS It does lead to the speculation as to why the Soviet's took the lead. The Soviets may not have wanted the Chinese to gain more than they had already gained.

GROSS That is exactly the point. It was consistent because when Ambassador Tsiang and I were talking it was after that radio broadcast in which the proposal was made.

JSS After the military commanders began to meet the North began to allege US utilization of bacteriological weapons, germ warfare. What was the affect of this in the United Nations?

GROSS Very great concern. I was away at some conference and I got called about that and as a matter of fact came back. We had a midnight session at the UN. You may remember I spoke for the US and denied the Soviet charges. I got a lot of brouhaha about that. Members were concerned about that; they really were concerned. And I think one of the weaknesses of our position, which I found rather acutely embarrassing, was that we were one of the few nations, having led in the adoption of the Geneva Convention back in 1929 outlawing the use of chemical and biological agents, that had never ratified it. The Chinese used that, claiming that we always had in mind the using of

germ or biological agents. So it made it difficult. Of course we proposed the International Red Cross be called upon to go in and investigate and so forth and so on. The Russians were doing this obviously for propaganda purposes. But there was considerable consternation. And some of the members credited the Soviet attack. Why they did that at that point I'm not sure.

JSS It was carried on for a considerable time?

GROSS Yes it was.

JSS And then it was followed actually after the signing of the armistice agreement by the very serious problem with regard to prisoners of war. Now I wonder how you could describe that, how you experienced it in New York.

GROSS Yes, that was very serious. That led to a very embarrassing public split between the United States and United Kingdom. That was a long story but to encapsulate it, the Chinese negotiators insisted that the North Korean prisoners of war in the Republic of Korea be repatriated simply because they were North Koreans and that the state interest overrode the individual interest. So the issue because one of principle and we, of course, refused the forcible repatriation of prisoners of war.

Then when we started interrogating prisoners of war inevitably the Chinese accused us of brainwashing and so forth and so on, by coercing them to say that they wanted to stay. That was a very hard, nasty problem. It turned out to be a very thorny political problem because the Indian government started to propose all sorts of amendments and modifications. One of the Indian proposed amendments to the resolution was that prisoners who declared that they did not want to be repatriated should not be turned loose in the population but should be kept in camps and that attracted the British. That we didn't accept it was obvious.

JSS The British were inclined to accept that?

GROSS Yes, they were inclined to accept it. I remember at the time there was a Herald Tribune headline: "US Britain split in UN on amending Indian plan for Korean war prisoners. 21 allies are called in session" Subcap heading: "Gross, Eden fail to agree; US insists on bars to forced repatriation." The reason I was involved with Eden who was in New York and his Minister of State who was Selwyn Lloyd was that Acheson was in Canada at a conference with the Canadian government so he instructed me to meet with Eden and to explain our objections. The Mission leaked it and as I was talking to Lloyd and Eden

a messenger came in with a piece of paper and showed it to Selwyn Lloyd. He read it and without saying anything to me, passed it to Eden. Eden said nothing but the atmosphere chilled and I learned before I left that there had been a wire service report that the Mission, while the meeting was going on, put out an account that we were split, having troubles, with the British. That came while we were talking at the Waldorf. I think the Mission thought- apparently totally uninstructed- that this pressure would help. I thought it was stupid but the story broke. Acheson rather unkindly says in his memoirs that although I was energetic and able, he learned never to send a boy to do a man's job. That's what he meant. He had forgotten if he ever knew what the hell had happened at that meeting. Really it was a terrible development.

JSS That brings me to another question. Acheson was spending a good bit of time in New York I believe in this period.

GROSS He was there for the General Assembly.

JSS I wondered what was the reaction to Acheson among the delegations. Was he very effective as US Secretary of State at this critical point in his relations with the other countries?

GROSS I think they respected him. I don't think that he got into many discussions with them that I was aware of. I think he might have felt the UN was a bit of a side show.

JSS That was the second question I was going to ask. What was his attitude toward the UN at this point?

GROSS What it always had been I guess. Before going to New York I was Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations. He had that job years before. When he asked me to do it he said it was obviously important because he had done it and he hoped I would take it on. So finally in 1949, after we had done NATO and a few other odds and ends that were very interesting, I said one day, now that the Congress has passed the UN Participation Act creating the job of Deputy US Representative with across -the-board authority which hadn't existed up to that point to exercise all the authority including voting in the Security Council that the Permanent Representative had, with rank of ambassador and all that, I really would like to go up there. I've always been interested in the UN just like I was interested in the League of Nations before as a student in Geneva. He looked at me with utter astonishment that I would want to do that. He

couldn't understand. He said you know I think you are doing a very very good job. He had just very skillfully steered the North Atlantic Treaty through the Senate. He said he was eternally grateful - a real flowery speech and he said really do you think you want to do that. I said yes I really would, Mr. Secretary. He shook his head as if about to say you should consult a psychiatrist if that's what you really want to do .He felt that there wouldn't be anything happening up there.

JSS

Going back a little bit in the story to the reaction in New York to the press conference given by President Truman which seemed to open the possibility of the utilization of nuclear weapons in Korea. What was the effect of that in New York?

GROSS

Well it was a shock. Of course I don't think it could be better described than Acheson does in his memoirs, Present at the Creation. But consternation in London and the rush trip by Prime Minister Atlee, and so forth. In New York we had the similar reaction generally around the board. I was instructed to make certain that the delegations understood that the President had not intended to threaten, or indicate, the use of atomic weapons; that he had rather frankly tried to say that in a war you never rule out the use of anything as a general

proposition and that it had no relation in his mind to the atomic weapon at that point although the question was specifically addressed to the atomic weapon. It was a careless slip one must say that. It was just inadvertent. Acheson and others used it as a horrible example of why press conferences on delicate matters are the worst institution that has ever been developed in diplomacy. There was concern about it but we were all reassuring. We didn't want to say we would never use the atomic weapon. We never wanted to say that.

JSS

This leads to another question and that is the concern with the broadening of the war to include China or perhaps into a world war. My impression from reading the various memoirs is that at the very beginning President Truman saw the danger of this and was determined that the war in Korean would not be expanded. Did you have specific instructions on this in New York? Were there extensive discussions with the Secretary-General or the other delegations on the subject?

GROSS

Actually to go back to that message that I read into the record here. The sentence, which struck me, was the very first one: "In view of the undeniably heightened danger of general war we should overlook no honorable possibility bringing about a peaceful settlement in

Korea." There was no question but that many delegations felt, just as the United States message put down, that there was a danger of general war because if China actually went to war against the United States the Russians would not be far behind. That was obvious; there would be a general war. I think that those two words meant what they said. I may sound dogmatic about what the delegations thought but I have evidence to support that. That evidence was the opposition we encountered when we proposed that there be what we called additional measures against China, which was called the strategic embargo; in other words a resolution we proposed which I discussed at great length with all responsible delegations, starting with the British and French, in which members of the UN undertook to embargo shipment of any war material including POL products- the usual war-sustaining resources or material. Time after time in these discussions with UN representatives, when we were stimulating support, the reaction was specifically that this might drive the Chinese to general war; that we would goad them by strangling their ability or at least impairing the military capabilities in holding on to Korea or carrying on their operations south of the 38th parallel. In other words to do what the Russian had set out to do back in June of 1950. So that was tangible evidence of the fear of a general war. We

had considerable difficulty getting support for that. Again it became public knowledge that our close allies were not very happy about that. But they did adopt the resolution.

JSS The resolution was passed

GROSS Yes.

JSS Just a final question in this connection. Which delegation would you identify as having been the most helpful, the most positive during the Korean crisis other than the British?

GROSS Well I say other than the British because despite occasional griping and admonitions they were really 100 percent, the Canadian government.

JSS Although I know that in Mr. Acheson's memoirs he suggests there were two unreliable people in New York one was Krishna Menon and the other was Lester Pearson.

GROSS He and Mike Pearson were friends nonetheless. Well he thought Pearson was a little wooly headed. For one thing he was very pro-UN. He and Acheson really respected each other but they were totally different temperaments.

Pearson was anything but an intellectual. He was smart as a whip but he was anything but intellectual in the Achesonian sense.

JSS And of course he felt strongly that the Peoples Republic should be seated.

GROSS Oh sure, And of course he was bucking for Secretary-General, as you know. Acheson thought that was another sign of moral decline. Who would want to be Secretary General? One quick story if you have a moment because I want to finish up with Acheson. He was such a wonderful fellow. I just loved him. As I mentioned he thought it was a psychiatric problem which had induced me to want to go to the UN. So one of the things he said was that nothing ever happens up there- totally dead. This was in I think, Oct, Nov of 1949. We had just finished our major labors on the North Atlantic Treaty. When he came up to the General Assembly after Korea he got very fed up with Vishinsky's endless tirades and so he turned around and said lets go out and relax a bit. We had somebody else take his seat. We went to the bar, the delegates lounge. "My friend and I crave a Martini" he said to the bartender. When he lifted his glass he said" Ernie let's drink to the activity at the UN." He was apologizing for saying that there wasn't anything happening up there.

JS

Thank you very much, Mr. Gross, for granting me this interview.



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