INTERVIEW III

DATE: September 15, 1983

INTERVIEWEE: LUCIUS D. BATTLE

INTERVIEWER: Ted Gittinger

PLACE: Ambassador Battle's office, Washington, D.C.

Tape 1 of 1

G: Let me begin by saying I found it intriguing that in your first oral history interview with us you mentioned your close relationship with Dean Acheson, Abe Fortas, and Senator [William] Fulbright. In view of their strong and often differing views on foreign policy, especially recalling Senator Fulbright's falling out with President Johnson, I wonder if these friendships ever had a way of complicating your life.

B: They complicated it, but, interestingly enough, each one was based on totally different sets of things. I was assistant to Dean Acheson the whole time he was secretary of state. I was his personal assistant, and we were involved heavily with the Far East and with Europe. He had very little interest in what became my area of specialization, the Middle East, and we never got involved with it. And he really pretty well stayed out of that area until--well, he was involved in the Cyprus crisis for a while, and on occasion would talk about Russian influence in the Middle East, or write about it, or something. He never involved himself very deeply in that.

My involvement with Abe Fortas was largely through cultural affairs. I guess I'd known him before. I was very fond of Abe and Carol in a lot of ways. And then [I knew] Bill Fulbright, because I ran the Fulbright program; when I was assistant secretary for educational and cultural affairs, I ran the Fulbright program. And my involvement with Bill at that stage had nothing to do with the Middle East. We have since that time become very close together on the Middle East, and I never had any particular differences with Acheson on that subject because he never involved himself with it very much. We didn't entirely agree on Cyprus. I was in charge of the 1967 crisis, and he first thought I was wrong in what I was--what we were trying to do, but it worked and he admitted that it hadn't gone badly, which was primarily due to Cyrus Vance, not due to me. Cy was the hero of that; I wasn't. But I did get the President to send Cy out there, and I did it largely by telephone back and forth.

But those were three relationships--particularly Acheson, who was my great mentor and friend--that went on throughout my life. As he got older, he got more and more right-wing, and more and more, he liked to break china to shock people. And as a consequence of that, we less and less talked substantively on issues, but we continued to be very great friends, corresponding if we weren't in the same town, all the rest of his life. I was extremely devoted to him and admired him very, very much. But the old curmudgeon thing, that role was one he acquired really in the latter days, and he was much more cautious, much more balanced, during the period he was secretary of state and thereafter, for a long time. He waited a very long time to write anything; his major book didn't come out for many years. He felt, as Dean Rusk has, that secretaries of state should--they're not supposed to get out and make a fast buck with a book. Dean Acheson

wrote on subjects not related to his own tenure in office: *A Democrat Looks at His Party*; *A Citizen Looks at the Congress*, that kind of thing, or "What It Takes To Be Secretary of State." But no really major work on foreign affairs until his book, which came out in--what? About 1970?

G: *Present at the Creation*?

B: *Present at the Creation*. So, all three of these people meant, in their differing ways, a good deal to me. I was less close to Abe than I was to the other two. Bill Fulbright and I still see a lot of each other, and we are still involved in many things together. And what pulls us together now is the Middle East and our own similar views on the subject, and we frequently are serving on the same committees and boards and things because of that.

G: How well did you know your predecessor in Cairo, Ambassador [John S.] Badeau?

B: Well, I really didn't know him very well. I have come to know him reasonably well since those days, but I didn't know him very well at that time. I stayed with him once. It was the first time, and the only time, I'd been in Cairo before I went there as ambassador. I went as assistant secretary of state for educational and cultural affairs, and I stayed with Badeau, and that's the first time I had met him. Never occurred to me I would be ambassador there. That's the first time that I had met him. I liked him very much. And then I replaced him; he had been gone a couple of months before I got there. I saw him in New York; we had dinner with him in New York before. Bill Benton gave me his apartment in New York, and I had the Badeaus to dinner there one night, and I saw him that time. I don't recall that I saw him again until he came out to Cairo two or three times while I was there and stayed with us. I saw him fairly frequently. We had no very strong disagreements. We were very different people, and we ran different kinds of embassies,

but that's all right; that's, I think, all to the good, you know. And I've just written a foreword to his biography, which has just been published.

I had differences of view with American policy during the Badeau period, but I don't know that I can say that was all John Badeau. My differences were rather easily defined. My basic difference is that the provision of PL-480 wheat was a major element of our policy toward Egypt at that period, and I think the administration first accepted a three-year agreement. I kept arguing, immediately after I got to Egypt and from then on, that what we wanted was a policy of continuous negotiation, no long-term agreements. Keep reminding--as soon as you got through one agreement, start negotiating the next, so that there was constantly before them the recognition of a need for friendship and a relationship that was meaningful. I consider that when you put your name on a long-term agreement, you've given away any leverage you might get out of it.

But at any rate, there was a tendency to minimize the obligation on the part of Egypt to keep a climate going that made the continuation of the grain flow possible, that it was not a thing that we could simply do. [Gamal Abdel] Nasser believed honestly that in some respects he was doing us a favor to take all that PL-480 wheat, that we had nowhere to store it. And he also really believed that he was paying for it, although he was buying it with local currency that we could only use in a very limited way and it was a paper transaction. And he never seemed to realize that his actions and his speeches and so on had a very direct impact on our ability to go on with it. Those are my differences of view. They're not substantial. Badeau seemed to accept those aspects where I viewed it very differently, but my period was different there.

G: Now you've touched on a interesting subject, and this was Nasser's public speechmaking posture and so on. Did we make any effort to bring across to him that this complicated our situation?

B: God, did I make an effort! We had several frank conversations--I'm sure there are telegrams on some of them. Maybe the whole feeling--after we got to know each other, and we did--reflected a funny, tough relationship. It was never quite the same as Badeau's with him, which it couldn't be, but we had a tough, interesting relationship. And I said to him once, "Mr. President, why do you make those speeches? I work for six months to improve our relations, and you undo everything I've done with one of those speeches." He said, "I'm only talking to my people." I said, "Mr. President, you cannot talk only to your people. You're the leader of a great country. Everything you say is examined thoroughly, read upside down, sideways, for meanings and nuance. Every one of those speeches is interpreted and has its impact." Then he changed his--"Well, I have to answer those people in the Congress." He was briefed on the Congressional Record regularly, which is surprising, but he was. And I said, "Well, Mr. President, let me make an agreement with you." "If the President of the United States or the Vice President of the United States"--oh, he said, he had to answer all these critics in the Congress; he said, "All those speeches that are made"--and he thought the President directed them. I said, "If the President of the United States, or the Vice President, or the Secretary of State, makes a speech attacking you, you answer them, and you won't hear anything from me. I

will accept that. But when you pick up an obscure congressman who makes a speech in New York [and] enhance the value of his speech to him because you've answered it, you're not serving yourself, and you're not serving the interests of improved U.S.-U.A.R. [United Arab Republic] relations."

Well, that was what he was doing. He would get furious, and he really believed that no one on the Hill would make a speech without the direction of the president.

G: Because no one in Cairo would have made a speech--

B: No one in Cairo would have, and therefore, you see, it was the same thing.

G: And you never cracked that--

B: Well, I did in a way. I did in a way. I talked with him. The wheat flow was suspended after the burning of the library and the shooting down of the [John] Mecom plane and the several events that occurred, and we finally got it released. I wanted the last of that three-year agreement finished--which was what, thirty-eight million dollars or something--I wanted to clean the slate on it, because it was an outstanding obligation. And then I was all in favor of my continuous negotiation theory. And we did get a six months' thing, but we didn't do any more. And that was the last agreement that was signed during the Nasser period.

But he was quiet for about a year, and a couple of times I got so I would anticipate in a funny kind of a way. The stories out of Israel were somewhat contrary to the fact, as it stood then--not as it stood later--primarily on the U.S. intention to arm Israel, which up until that time we had not done in any major way. And the stories were flowing out of Israel, and I knew that President Nasser had a big speech coming up. So I called Sami Sharaf, his assistant, and I said, "Sami, would you please give the President a

message for me? Tell him that the stories coming out of Israel on the Harriman visit are quite inaccurate and that I will be requesting an appointment in a few days to see him. I will go over the entire thing with him." Well, when I went out to see him, he said. "It was a good thing you called me." Well, I knew it was. He said, "I was just working on making notes for my speech when you called, and I was about to talk about that, and I left it out until your [explanation]." So I did that kind of thing.

But it was a matter of being rather sensitive to what would stir him up and to the likely opportunity that existed at any given time to make a speech, or to--of course, I could not ever guarantee it, but I tried to.

G: Let's talk about some mundane things for a minute, and then we'll come back to this. Was Cairo a popular post? Was it a desirable posting in the diplomatic corps?

B: It was considered an extremely desirable ambassadorial post. It was Class I, of which there were, what? Twelve or fifteen around the world, in total. It was always considered important; we'd had some fairly important ambassadors there. For the people down the line, it was, I think, exciting and interesting, but it was not an easy post for them. And it's rather strange, and I've thought about this: morale in Cairo was never particularly good, and I know why. It was so much like home. I mean, you had all the--the secretaries had nice apartments; they had servants; it was easy to get most things there; it wasn't very difficult. The embassy was quite large. But there wasn't this unity that you had, for example, in Jidda, where things were miserable. I would have hated being assigned there. But they lived on one compound, and they kind of took care of each other. And the morale problems in the embassy were largely the single women, who tended to be well along in years, middle-aged or older, thirty-five, forty-five, fifty-five, et cetera, and

the absolute shortage of single men around, except the young marines who were eighteen to twenty, and that didn't work out well. I used to try to have singles parties at the residence on occasion. They weren't very successful, for that reason. And we'd pick up every unattached--in each of the embassies, not just American, but other embassies, the British and others, but there were not many of them. And it was rather difficult to do much about it. Everybody lived in--and they were somewhat separate, all around town, particularly the single people. That was where the big morale problem was.

And then the rest of the staff, those who rented houses or lived in U.S.-owned houses, tended to be out in Maadi, which is a suburb, in those days twenty minutes from town. Today it takes an hour to get out there. But that looked like the Middle West somewhere. It was a very diplomatic-looking kind of a community, European sort of community, perfectly comfortable, but they lived too much in an enclave, I thought. And the American school was out there. I don't think that morale among the families was particularly bad. It was largely the single people.

G: Would I be correct in saying that they missed the exotic, that there was no--

B: Well, the exotic was there, but the trouble with the Americans [was] so much of the family life centered in Maadi. As I used to say in the staff meetings, "You don't mix up enough in what goes on in Cairo." There were about four or five ofthe couples who were active in the city, who went to the art openings and came to the opera--it was pretty bad, but they came--[and] the concerts, whatever, and who participated in the life of Cairo, as opposed to the life of the diplomatic community.

And I tried to discourage that, but the exotic--there was a never-ending array of sightseeing. There were always new digs somewhere that were being found or started, and remarkable desert things, and there were lots of interesting things to do. Horseback riding was available; we used to ride horseback out on the desert, these marvelous Arabian horses, very cheap. You could ride for practically nothing, and they would take groups out--there were lots of picnics on horseback out on the desert and things like that. You could view the pyramids and the sphinx, and that was pretty exciting stuff. And then there was Luxor and all the sightseeing in Alexandria. We had an old house in Alexandria that had been given to the United States government as a summer residence for the ambassador, and I changed the rules on it. We did it over, modestly, but we did it over. And it became a place that anyone in the embassy could get. I guess it had been used by others before, but I changed the rules on it somewhat. I said I would preempt it only if I had to go there on business. Other than that, anyone could sign up for it, and they paid a modest fee for using it and paid the servants. And that kept going, and it was very useful. It had a swimming pool and tennis court and had about six bedrooms, and a lot of the groups around the embassy would get together. It was not an elaborate house, but it was very comfortable, Germanic in feeling. It was in a very old part of Alexandria. And then some of the people would lease houses on the beach.

But there were times when there was great political tension; you could walk out of the door and sniff the breezes, and you knew immediately whether it was going to be a good day or a bad one. And I can't tell you why. But the anti-Americanism, the stress and strain--it took its toll. And it was rather strong in those days.

So all those were factors in it. I considered it an absolutely excellent post, from my point of view, but I am sure that my life was not typical of--I had my problems, but they were different from the rest of the embassy.

G: Were the morale problems ever such that they affected performance?

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But there were all sorts of pressures, some of them rather silly. For example, the spy satellite, which was photographing all over the world at regular intervals, was photographing the--I was briefed on it before I left the States to go out to Egypt. I knew all about it. I say I knew all about it--I knew what it could do. And it was written about in the New York Times, but none of my military attaches or anybody else knew anything about it. And they kept coming to me to get permission to use planes for photographic reconnaissance, and I would turn them down. And they thought that was ridiculous. And to make it even sillier, the lower levels in the Pentagon that received their photographs kept writing to the embassy, saying, "Why don't you get more pictures?" And I sent back messages over and over again--it took me almost two years to get this straight--asking

that my senior military advisors be briefed on the spy satellite system. And that I thought I was put in a very awkward position, and I was making determinations of what they could do on the basis, not of real logic--for example, they wanted to take a stateroom on a ship in Alexandria which was going to Beirut, and photograph. Well, I thought a lateral photograph like that might be useful and might be different than just photographs of ships in the harbor or whatever, and I said, "All right, we'll do that one." But I wouldn't let them take things when I knew we already had them and didn't need them. And on a couple of occasions they went on and did it. Once they got caught. And it just didn't make any sense.

Finally, finally--all the service attaches were furious with me, because I was refusing to let them do what was going to amount to--have some factor on their next promotion. And finally I got them--flew with a couple of them to Frankfurt, and they got briefed at Frankfurt. Then they understood perfectly and said, "You know, you're right." And it was so obvious, and I did it all on my own; nobody told me. But it just didn't make any sense to me to gamble on using our planes for things, and whatever, which you already had and better than the plane could take. So it just seemed to me that you were taking a risk for no purpose at all. I didn't mind a risk if it produced vital information that amounted to something, but it didn't seem to me that it made much sense.

G: Was there any connection between this sort of operation and the shooting down of the Mecom plane?

B: No, I don't think so. Although that Mecom plane thing--I think I put this on the last tape. Do you want me to go over it again?

G: Not necessary. I thought you might have learned something--

B: No, I think it seemed on the face of it--there were some elements that were never really clear. But after we got it all together, people had acted more logically on all sides. And I've been saying to people [regarding] the Korean plane recently, before the--when they were denying that any warning had been given, I said, "Well, I'd like to see them deny that any American plane was there. Wait until it's all in." The whole thing to me looked very differently, and I remembered this incident of the Mecom plane, which--weeks went by before the Egyptians really let the FAA examiners, or whatever, whoever came out there--but by the time that everybody looked at the thing, it wasn't--we hadn't been quite as bad. Nobody had, as it appeared. There was one rumor--and I don't know whether it was true or not--that something was thrown off the plane. And there was a rumor around the town that hashish was being flown back and forth. But to the best of my knowledge it had nothing to do with CIA.

G: Do you know Miles Copeland? Was he around then?

B: I do know Miles Copeland, and I had absolutely no regard for him of any kind. He'd been a CIA operative; he would run around, and he was in and out of town allegedly working for National Cash Register. He would tell everybody, "I no longer have any connection with CIA." And then he would say, "If there's anything that you want to get back, you know, tell me. I'll get it back for you." And he, as a result of that, caused considerable confusion. And he would hang around the embassy; over the years I think he's been a very negative force in a lot of things. And I think you'd find a lot of agreement on that. No, he was not--in his book, he had--I never read it, or bought it. Various people sent me copies of references to me. And he was combining things that

happened a year apart as though they were the following day, and there were all sorts of distortions in the book, even in the portion I saw. No, I had a very low opinion of him.

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B: I don't know whether I am or not.

G: Well, I won't ask you then.

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G: How did you handle the administration of the embassy? Did your deputy handle that?

B: Well, in the beginning, I had Bill Boswell there, and then I had David Nes. I kept a reasonable eye on most of it, but I tried to leave it to the DCM [Deputy Chief of Missions].

G: And you handled the Egyptian side?

B: I handled the Egyptian side. I met regularly with the senior staff all the time, and when I wanted to involve myself in the substance of the place, and to a degree I tried to keep an eye on--there were a few things that I don't want to get into, a lot of detail about the Nes case. There is a lot about that one that is just wild. But he was very erratic. And he put out an order once that no one from the embassy could take TWA back. Well, TWA was the only American plane flying out of Egypt. If you didn't take TWA, you had to fly over to Beirut and catch a Pan American [flight] going back to the States. And he put out this order. Well, the reason he put it out was that his daughter, who was about fifteen, had been on TWA and she'd flown [through] Rome, and she'd gotten off in Rome and hadn't gone back on the plane and was missing for about twenty-four hours. And he blamed that on the airline. Well, it may have been quite a valid thing, but it didn't lead to that frantic, wild instruction that obviously we weren't going to be able to live with. And there was no basis for it. Finally I said, "David, you've got to change this order. Why don't you say what you meant was you wanted to review all of the requests for travel to

be sure we were using Pan American as much as we could, and that would balance our use of both airlines from the area." That was a defensible position. But to say you couldn't take TWA--well, in the first place, TWA would have gone to the State Department, and the whole thing would have been terrible. It was all due to this problem with his daughter, and I felt very sorry for him about that, but that did not lead logically to the next step.

So there would be cases, incidents like that, where somebody was just wild. But in the main I tried to stay out of the day-to-day administration. Well, some things, purchases of property and things of that sort, I had to sign for it. I always made those decisions. And I did try very hard--we had all these blocked pounds, and I was very interested in the American University of Cairo. And I decided that what we ought to try to do was to endow AUC with the use of the pounds. One of the few legal uses was purchase of real estate. So I told the head, Tom Bartlett, a marvelous man, who was head of American University of Cairo at that time, "You find property in or around the university that you want us to buy, and you come to me with a request that we buy it, and we will provide you"--the rent control over there was such that the endowment, you wouldn't get much rent for it from anybody. But it would provide for expansion in time, and growth, and some perhaps small income.

So we bought a number of properties, and also I got the embassy to buy a lot. I wish we'd bought ten times more. The value of downtown Cairo rose until it was fantastic. But all in all, we had two hundred million dollars in pounds blocked. I maybe had spent two or three million dollars--I don't know, something like that--acquiring

property. Bought a new residence, which I never lived in, still--they tore down the one that was there and rebuilt it, just about to move into it now.

That kind of administrative thing--but I thought that was kind of a creative use of blocked money, and made sense in the end. And I think everybody was pleased that we did what we did, and regretted, as I do, that we didn't do more. So I got involved in administration in that sense.

G: President Johnson was well known for using special emissaries to make points at various times. How did this complicate the ambassador's position?

B: Well, if coordinated with, and done with, the ambassador, it's no great problem. If it's done in lieu of the ambassador, particularly without the ambassador participating, it becomes another thing. I didn't have any great problem with that. John McCloy came out; he was the first one. It was an arms control meeting, trying to control the development of spreading nuclear arms. And I'd known Jack for many years; we were very friendly. He stayed with us; he was the first houseguest we had. He was there as part of something we'd gone over before; it was not his first trip. I went with him to see President Nasser. That presented no problem for me.

Later, we had Averell Harriman. Averell I'd known forever. He was then on a European tour on Vietnam. If he hadn't come, under the circumstances, it would have looked bad, because he was going to a lot of other places. And at that stage in life, Nasser was waiting in the wings and wanted to be the big peacemaker in Vietnam, and a couple of times leaked stories after [inaudible], and one of them got in the papers, that he and I had had a big meeting, which we hadn't. Somebody leaked the story. It was big news here for about fifteen minutes that somehow Battle and Nasser were solving the

whole thing. Well, we had talked a couple of times, but, God, we weren't anywhere near a solution.

But at any rate, the Nasser regime wanted to be a party to finding a solution, and he saw himself as the leader of the Third World, the non-aligned world. This was a legitimate function for him and seemed to me to be something that should be encouraged. He was waiting in the wings, would have been happy to play that role.

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It was not just that. I took books to him all the time. Nasser was very bright. He was brighter than [Anwar] Sadat; his mind was quicker. He was inexperienced and uneducated, by American standards. And his experience with the West and with democracy and with the way--well, I don't always like what goes on in this country, [but] I understand what the forces are at work. For example, the wheat agreement was pending at the time of the elections in 1964. They had been suspended due to the plane incident and the burning of the library and all those things. And after the election of 1964, when LBJ got that enormous landslide, I went out to see the President. I don't recall when it was, probably December. No, it must have been later. Well, I don't remember, but the point [is), he said to me, "Well, now, after this election, the President [Johnson] can do

anything he wants to!" And he banged the table. "Anything he wants to." I said, "Mr. President, he can't." He said, "Well, why can't he? If he can't do anything he wants to, I don't believe in democracy." And I said, "Well, Mr. President, there are a lot of factors here. There is the whole checks-and-balances system of our Congress," and I explained to him how any chairman of a subcommittee could bottle up something that had nothing to do with Egypt at all, that what was at issue was clearing a tax bill, not Egypt, and that there were all these checks and balances. Well, that rather surprised him. I can't remember when that conversation took place, but it might have been later than that. It probably was; it was probably sometime in January or so.

But at any rate, the conversation referred to the preceding election, to the great landslide. And he had a rather different view of the way our government works than was true to the fact.

G: Did he ever learn any differently, do you think?

B: He was getting better, and when the long silence on speeches and the effort to help improve things so that there could be a resumption, I kept telling him that this had to--some of these things. There were a number of real issues between us, and I had been over those things. One of them was the fact that he had announced that they were aiding the Congo rebels. Well, that infuriated the President and everybody here. Whether he ever did really aid them or not, I seriously doubt it. And if he did, he wasn't in a position to aid anybody very much, and any aid he gave, I think, was minimal. But he said publicly he was doing it, and that was almost as bad as doing it. And so I kept objecting to that in our conversations. Then, in one of these visits, when Phil Talbot carne out on Easter Sunday, 1965, we went out to see the President, and the President--in this

marvelous Arab way, he couldn't admit to us that he'd changed the policy. But he referred to the policy in the past tense. He said, "When we used to aid the rebels," or something like that. And I said, "Mr. President, did I understand you to say 'in the past'?" He said, "Yes." I said, "I gather that means you're not aiding the rebels now." "That's correct." Now, you can't imagine what a concession that was. It was very important. And yet it was tossed off in a funny little way, and it was to let me know, to let Talbot know, that, in effect, he had done what we had urged him to do.

G: Did you make that the subject of a cable--?

B: Oh, yes, immediately, just as fast as I could. And it was very helpful. But it was that kind of thing that would occur, you see. And that was a part of, I think, his understanding, which had not been the case in the past. He had not related obtaining the wheat, the fact that we had to get approval of the Congress on those wheat agreements, we had to get an appropriation to buy the wheat, and while it really wasn't a purchase in that sense, it had to be approved by the Congress and also for political grounds. And he had not recognized that or had not accepted it. And what I kept emphasizing throughout my early talks with him--I said, "If we go on with these programs, which we very much want to, there has got to be a reasonable climate in our relationships, or it will never be possible." And I think he got that, in fact.

G: Let me ask you a question I always ask, and that concerns the press. Was there a press policy for guidance of embassy personnel?

B: Well, the Western press there numbered about six or seven people at that time. *The New York Times* was there, AP [Associated Press], a few others, a couple of British; two or three people in Beirut came over regularly. The press was handled by the USIA [United States Information Agency] and the press man, who was quite good, and by me. And I was very much accustomed to the press; they don't bother me. I had regular meetings with them. And I never had any real problem. I never had any particular violation of confidence. A couple of times, they, without reference to anything I had said or done, interpreted events differently than I would have liked and--I told them--differently than I thought the truth was. But you couldn't always blame that on them. And there were moments--I said to them at the first meeting, "There are going to be moments when your interests and mine are going to be absolutely different. But in the main, I don't think they are. And there will be times when I can't talk about something. I'm just going to refuse, either refuse to see you or refuse to talk about it. I can't help it." But I had a good, straightforward, honest relationship with them; I never had any problem. And neither did the embassy, really. It was not a major problem.

G: Do you recall any reporters who were particularly good, or any particularly--

B: Well, Hedrick Smith was there. Scotty Reston called me and said, "We're sending a new man out there. It's his first overseas assignment. Hedrick Smith." And he did a pretty good job. He was a zealot, I mean, he really went after it, and he was the one I was thinking about. A couple of times he wrote things that seemed to me to be a little overeager. But he was very good. And we had Eric Pace there for a while, and we had--I can't remember the names of some of these fellows; I can see them in my mind. The fellow from the *Christian Science Monitor*. John Cooley used to come over a lot, and he

was based in Beirut. Then we would get a lot of people out at one time, *U.S. News*, or Mark [Marquis] Childs or somebody would come through. Oliver Rankin, the columnist, would come through, and I would see him. Kay [Katharine] Graham came out.

No, I had no particular problem with them, and I have no particular criticism of them. They operated in a very difficult world, and we got along fine, we really did.

G: How important or unimportant were leaks in the conduct of the press? I know the President was very sensitive on the subject.

B: Well, the President, I thought, was oversensitive on the subject. I thought that the problem with both President Johnson and President Kennedy is they were two of the worst leakers in town themselves. I remember once--(Laughter)--when Mac [McGeorge] Bundy called me about a leak; he said Kennedy was furious about it. It appeared in Joe Alsop's column, and it could only come from the State Department. Well, I happened to know that President Kennedy had been with Joe Alsop the preceding night, or two nights before. Oh, we were going through hell. I had to trace every copy--I was then executive secretary--everybody who got a copy of the telegram; I had to find out everybody that read it. We had the FBI, everybody you could think of coming in on that. And I said, "Mac, I'll go through this charade, but we both know where that story came from." And he said, "Yes, Luke, the vessel of government is the only one that leaks from the top." (Laughter) And it was absolutely true.

So, frequently some of the interpretive stuff that came out--there was no problem in Cairo; the leak problem, to the extent we had it, was from back here. Well, I can't say there was no leak problem. Leaks on things with Israel--there were very few leaks with respect to Egypt *per se* that caused us problems. There were leaks with respect to other

countries that did, particularly Israel, and particularly in the period when we [inaudible]. And everybody got caught on it; it was a silly charade, performance. We encouraged the Germans to sell tanks to the Israelis, because the U.S. government didn't want to do it, and we were to provide additional tanks to Germany to make up for those sold to Israel. So we got caught. And it led to all sorts of relations being broken and to a whole series of actions that everybody regretted, and it began to leak. But that wasn't leaked from us, and it had nothing to do with Cairo directly. But it was the result of this leak, this action, in Cairo. How anybody ever thought you could get by with it without anybody knowing, it was thought that we could. Those leaks had a very real impact.

G: Were you called to President Nasser to explain what's going on with these tanks?

B: Well, not at that particular moment. It came up in a later conversation. They were livid. They broke relations with Germany. Then they sort of forgot they had. When they had the diplomatic line, the President would have these big dinners at the [inaudible] palace, and we'd all line up in pecking order, and they continued to call the name of the German ambassador for a long time after they'd broken relations with them, and he obviously wasn't there. (Laughter)

G: One of the documents that I think I sent you has a note to the effect that--I think it's from Harold Saunders--it says, "This confirms what I have suspected for some time, which is that the Arabs don't really understand what it means to break relations."

B: They don't understand. They think it's some little thing you do, and if you're mad, you just break relations. And then, if they have a little trouble, they can't understand why

everything stops. I tried to save my damnedest--I don't remember the facts well enough to get it [?], but it had something to do with the British and Rhodesian issue, but I've forgotten what it was. But I tried to save that break between the Egyptians and the British. The British didn't help themselves very much, and I on my own got into the act a little bit. And if the British themselves had behaved a little wiser and a little more quickly, I think that could have been avoided. But nevertheless, the break was very unfortunate, and by the time I left there, the West--there were the French, who were rather ineffective, and there were the Canadians, and I guess the Italians were still there. But the British were gone; the Germans were gone; the West really was pretty poorly represented at that point. John Starling [?] became the new Canadian ambassador there. I'd known him before, and I said, "You know, you're going to, in effect, represent the West, and the [North Atlantic] alliance, and we're all going to be dependent in one way or another on you to [inaudible], because that's the only way we're going [to have] direct relations with them." Up until that point, I guess I had been the focal point. Of course, I didn't realize that the U.S. wouldn't have relations at that point, but we didn't [inaudible].

G: Who was the desk officer in Washington while you were in Cairo?

B: Rodger Davies and Harry Simms [?] did most ofthe work. Rodger Davies was ambassador to Cyprus and was married later, one of the finest people I ever worked with or ever knew.

G: I have a section here I've entitled "Nasser's Egypt," for want of anything better. What did Nasser want for Egypt?

B: I think he changed what he wanted. I think what he started out to do was really pretty good. He wanted to free Egypt from external control and external domination, and he

wanted to develop its economy. He didn't quite know how; he didn't have a clear body of political philosophy. And he never did. But he wanted a place in the sun for Egypt. The emphasis on "Arab," I think, came later. I don't think the Egyptians knew they were Arab until he told them they were Arab.

G: Are they Arab?

B: Well, you can argue it. Yes, they are, but they're Egyptians. They're Muslims, the majority are Muslim, but the inter-Arab relationship was something he latched onto later. He started out pretty much to do the things that were right for Egypt. Although he didn't quite know where he was going, his general conceptions were pretty good. As time went on, he sort of lost his way, and one of the things that really interfered was his own ego. He went to this non-aligned conference in Ceylon, I think it was, and he suddenly was a major international figure, and he and [Josip Broz?] Tito and [Jawaharlal] Nehru became the triumvirate that ruled the Third World. And this was just almost too much for him. He suddenly was a major world figure, and everybody was shaking when he spoke. And I think that got in his way. Then he tried to be the leader of the Organization of African Unity, OAU, and the non-aligned world, and the Arab world, these three concentric circles that everybody was talking about. And his emphasis came to be on himself and on his external role more than on his internal role, and therein was the disastrous direction. And he got carried away with his own importance, and he meddled in things like the Congo, Yemen.

My last meeting with him was March 4, 1967. On the night of March 4, 1967, [Marshal Abdel Hakim] Amer and [Mohamed Hassanein] Heikal gave a dinner for us, very small. The Sadats were there, Marshal Amer--the only time I ever really talked to

him--[Mahmoud] Riad, and I think that was all the party. We stayed there until very late, about two or three o'clock in the morning, the men in one room and the women in another, and we were talking about where we were going.

I went down to the embassy the next day and wrote my last telegram, finally. And I said, "The country's in terrible shape." I'd spent two hours with Nasser the preceding day and, as I remember, that morning. And in the year past, he had made a very anti-American speech. He had made it at the worst possible moment; they were just clearing the last routine paperwork when the ticker came in. They were clearing the business of a new AID [Agency of International Development] wheat agreement, and the ticker just really finished it. And so he said to me, "I want to withdraw our request for wheat." I said, "Well, I assumed you would, Mr. President. I'd like to say one thing: you gave up before I did. I was still trying."

We talked at that point about the likelihood of war; I don't think he intended to go to war with Israel. He made it very clear to me he couldn't win. But the next day I wrote this telegram, after all those hours with Heikal and Sadat and Riad and Marshal Amer, and I said, "This country's in terrible trouble. Nasser's about to do something extreme. There are three possible directions that I can see. He's in real trouble economically; he's in trouble at home; he's in trouble abroad. He's bogged down in Yemen. He will do one of three things. He's got to get money. He [may] heat up Yemen, aimed at putting more pressure on the Saudis to bail him out financially. Alternatively, he will heat up the Libyan situation. He's got lots of Egyptians living there; he can use them as internal sources of pressure on King Idris, again aimed at money. The third, and least likely, is that he will heat up the Arab-Israeli thing. Not that he wishes to go to war, but he wishes

to reclaim his place in the sun, his place of glory and his leadership, and to reestablish himself as a major figure."

I was right, and I was wrong. He did heat up the Yemen, first, and so I thought that was the way he was going. And for a lot of reasons he got carried away with that Israeli thing. I don't think he meant to go to war; I don't think he intended to at all. I think he thought that--and again this gets back to that non-aligned thing. When he called for the removal of troops, the world forgot one thing, and that was that the troops that were there, the UN troops that were there, were heavily Yugoslav and Indian, almost entirely. And the hand of the grave--Tito was an old doddering dodo by that time, and Mrs. [Indira] Gandhi was in power, but she still followed Nehru, and when Nasser said he wanted the troops withdrawn, they said, "Well, of course." And without waiting for--and I think he really thought that someone would disentangle him before it got out of control. I think that's what he thought he was doing. But at any rate, he didn't.

I'd like to reread that last telegram. I haven't seen it. Have you?

G: It's not--

B: It's never been released yet. I've told two or three journalists about it. Somebody was here working on a book recently. I told him, and he tried to get it, but he couldn't do it. I don't know what's in it; I've forgotten what I said.

G: That's a problem with Middle East documents. Sometimes you're still dealing with people who are currently exercising power. There are some things you can't say.

What did we want for Egypt?

B: What we wanted was, we did not want communist influence to increase. We wanted the flow of oil; we wanted the Suez Canal to remain open and navigable; we wanted as much stability in Egypt, and in the area, as we could have. We hoped, ultimately, to get Egypt to accept the existence of Israel; we saw the opportunity to trade there one of these days, even though it did not in any way appear immediate. There was a whole set of needs there, a whole set of requirements that they had, that would and could, in certain circumstances, be an opportunity for us. I think that sums up about what we wanted: [inaudible] the absence of communist domination, flow of trade, particularly the Suez Canal, the flow of oil.

G: Was our policy well directed in achieving those things?

B: I think the aid, probably. I think we went a little overboard without clarifying to the Egyptians--I don't think they understood it, as I said earlier. And I don't think they understood that they had to make an input into it. That's the only real error we made. And I think some of our aid programs were not terribly well-conceived or specific. They didn't work; they were above the comprehension and abilities of some of the Egyptians who had to implement them. I can't even remember all of them terribly well. But there was great emphasis for a while on the growing of chickens, on certain kinds of agricultural pursuits, various things that were total breaches of tradition. I think some of those things were--we were a little ahead of what they were able to do. I can't even back that up, but anyway, that was my impression at the time.

G: What levers did we have to nudge Nasser in the directions we thought were desirable?

B: It seemed to me that the aid--the conception that I had of continuous negotiation--if you said it was *quid pro quo*, you were in trouble with them, and the conception of dignity, and we never sell our interests, et cetera, was very strong and very real. And I don't think you ever--but the fact that you had a continuous negotiation with him almost all the time, and with the government, for more meaningful amounts of aid, was, I thought, important. It seemed to me that you needed to have short-term, not long-term, arrangements, and there needed to be an increased pressure on him to understand the realities of our country and the political problem back here, which I don't think he--I think he was beginning to get it, as time went on. But he misread it. I think today it's a different story. I think the political pressures now, domestically, have changed somewhat from what they were then. I think the Jewish lobbies in this country have become much more powerful over recent years than they were in those days. This is partly due to the fact that our elections have been closer, and two or three key states have emerged as absolutely vital to the presidential campaign, and the marginal vote there is heavily Jewish. So the political pressures in our country have become very, very great, I think greater than they were in those days.

G: You knew Sadat.

B: I knew Sadat very well. I've written a couple of pieces about him; I got to know him very soon after I came to Cairo. He was speaker of the national assembly. I don't know why, he loved to--he'd come to the house for dinner when I invited him, when I had congressmen and senators, he was very happy to come. He had the rank of vice president; he had no power. Nasser used to sort of belittle him to me as "your friend,

Sadat, who's so pro-American." I said, "What's wrong with that, Mr. President? I wish there were a few more like that around here," or words to that effect.

But I got to know him quite well, and in 1966, I arranged for him to take a trip here to [the United States]. Under the Fulbright-Hays Act, and from my old bureau, Educational and Cultural Affairs, I knew where the tickets were. And I had asked for an official visit by somebody, got turned down--controversial, very difficult. But we gave these two tickets to the Sadats; they were two round-trip tourist-class tickets, and twelve dollars a day each allowance. Well, I got the tourist class promoted to first class--probably illegally, but I did it; I don't remember how I did it. TWA agreed to do it. And then I got the twelve dollars a day turned over to the escort, who was Michael Sterner, a very fine--later ambassador. And I wrote friends all across the country, got them to entertain for them, pick up hotel bills, whatever. So they never knew what they were doing, and it was all done with mirrors, but it was a huge success. And he came back absolutely ecstatic. He loved the country; he loved democracy; he loved the Congress. He came back and reorganized the General Assembly--people forgot this--along the lines of the Eighty-ninth Congress. And he thought the Congress was marvelous. I had written Bill Fulbright; Bill had a tea or something for him to meet the Committee. He was entertained rather royally while he was here. And this had a very real impact, a very real impact. And after that, we continued to see a great deal of each other.

People said to me [that] I was the one who discovered him and recognized all of his potential. That's not true. I didn't. As far as I was concerned, he was about the right

level for me to send back here. Nobody had ever heard of him at that point. He was not going to be a magnet to draw demonstrations and fire. He had about the right amount of influence in Egypt, which was not very great, but since Nasser was willing to let him go, he was already, for reasons that were never clear to me, tagged as being pro-Western, so you weren't getting another convert. These were the reasons that I am sure went through their minds. So I thought he was bright; I thought he was not as bright as Nasser. He was a broad-brush man. Nasser would study his lesson a little more thoroughly than Sadat would. And this marked Sadat's whole--all the period that came after. He was dealing with things with broad, broad treatment and direction rather than specificity. And he was one for sweeping directions as opposed to carefully conceived plans. A lot of that got him in trouble.

But he became a great friend, and I saw a lot of him the last year or so. And I saw him when I went out there several times, and I saw him after I left government. And I usually saw him when he was here [inaudible]. And we were in touch, more or less, for a long time thereafter.

G: I gather you were not among those who then professed surprise when he took the reins--

B: Yes, I was. I was, a little bit. I felt when he first took over that he was not strong enough internally to manage it, and I thought it was an interim. I didn't belittle him quite the way some others did, but I did not really believe that he had the power to hold on to--I felt there were other contenders.

G: Were you able to follow the process by which he consolidated his position?

B: I wasn't close enough to it to be sure. I had one conversation years later with Mustafa

Amin, whom I told you about, the editor who was arrested and put in jail, stayed in jail for a number of years, almost died in jail. I had never known him when I was ambassador there, but I was there on a trip some years later, after the Sadat regime, and he told someone he'd like very much to meet me. I was very surprised. And his brother Ali was there then; they had been brought back to glory by Sadat. They later fell out of favor, but they were back in glory. And they said they'd like to have a meeting with me. So I said I'd be delighted to call on them, if my presence didn't embarrass them, and they said it didn't.

So I went over and had a talk with Mustafa and Ali Amin. It surprised me. And we got to talking about Sadat, and I said--we were talking about just the point that you made, did you ever anticipate it. And Mustafa said that in the early days, when he was very close to Nasser, he said to Nasser one time, "Gamal, who will succeed you?" And Gamal thought for a minute, and he said, "Anwar Sadat." And then he paused. He said, "Because no one knows he wants it." And that's a very Arab kind of statement. I don't think I've ever put that in anything before. And it was a very interesting statement, and I think that the fact that no one knew that he wanted it was probably a strong asset, at least initially, and the fact that he wasn't everybody's enemy and everybody's competitor.

G: He wasn't being cut up in the infighting.

B: That's right.

G: That's an interesting observation.

B: I've got to stop here in a few minutes. I don't know; I've said a few things on the air I don't--most of it I'd be perfectly happy--do I put a time element on it? Are you going to send me a tape of this?

End of Tape I and Interview III

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