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Chief Administrator or Political ‘Moderator’?: Dumbarton Oaks, the Secretary-General and the Korean War

Seventy-five years after representatives of the ‘Big Four’ – the United States, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the Republic of China – met at Dumbarton Oaks on the outskirts of Washington, DC, to discuss the foundation of a new international organization, the secretary-general is widely seen as the United Nations’ (UN) de facto figurehead. Still, it remains unclear whether the wartime allies envisaged such a political character for this office since, in the interim, each secretary-general has acted according to his interpretation of his powers.¹ By examining the discussions that took place on this issue before, during and immediately after the Dumbarton Oaks conference this article will seek to assess exactly what powers the UN founders intended for the secretary-general. What is clear – despite the very limited nature of the talks that took place in August 1944 on this issue – is the apparent agreement that the secretary-general of the new international organisation should be more proactive in maintaining international peace and security than his purely administrative League of Nations’ predecessor.

Furthermore, the secretary-general’s specific functions remained largely unarticulated even after the establishment of the UN. As a result, the first officeholder, the wartime Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs Trygve Lie, sought to test the political powers of his office. Lie had demonstrated his activism on a number of occasions between 1946 and 1950. His most controversial intervention, however, occurred following the outbreak of the Korean War when the UN’s capacity to maintain international peace and security was tested fully for the first time. Given the Cold War friction generated over Lie’s actions it is essential to question whether the Secretary-General transgressed the role the UN founders had intended for his office. This article will argue that Lie did test the parameters of his office but at no time breached these limits. He thus set a number of important precedents that helped shape the secretary-general’s distinctly political character for his successors and ensured that each subsequent office-holder would be the symbol of the world organisation.

It should be noted here, moreover, that Lie’s role in shaping the office of the secretary-general has been largely overshadowed by that of his successor, the Swedish diplomat Dag Hammarskjöld, whose more intellectual, subtle and eloquent approach has, subsequent to his untimely death in an air crash in the service of the UN during the Congo

¹ To date all nine UN secretaries-general have been men.

crisis, been near-universally praised. As such, Hammarskjöld has attracted far more scholarly attention than Lie. That Hammarskjöld re-imagined the political role of the secretary-general was articulated most strongly by Sir Brian Urquhart² – Hammarskjöld’s former Secretariat colleague turned biographer – and has been oft-repeated, including recently by Anne Orford.³ Hammarskjöld himself also sought much more than his predecessor to outline the powers of secretary-general.⁴ Undeniably, therefore, Hammarskjöld merits the plaudits he has received. Yet this article demonstrates that Lie’s actions, especially during the Korean War, laid the necessary foundations for the Swede to pursue an even more political approach to the office of the secretary-general.

Preparations for a world organisation to succeed the discredited League of Nations began in earnest in 1942 following the signing of the Declaration by the United Nations. Policy-makers within the US Department of State took the lead in this process with their British, Russian and Chinese counterparts preoccupied with the more immediate issue of defeating the Axis powers. Inevitably, the focus of attention in Washington was on how this new organisation could avoid the failings of its predecessor and prevent the outbreak of future conflict. Questions regarding the character of the staff of the new organisation, therefore, were considered low priority. During 1943, nonetheless, serious concerns were raised over establishing a non-political chief administrator akin to the League’s secretary-general.

Ruth Russell’s book remains easily the best account of the State Department’s deliberations on this issue.⁵ In this work, Russell outlines the three separate position papers created within the State Department. In the first paper, the Draft Constitution of International Organization, produced on 14 July 1943, the ‘general-secretary’ was to act as the non-voting chairman of the Executive Council and be able to summon meetings. More significantly, the general-secretary was also permitted to request parties ‘to desist from any action which would further aggravate the situation’ if a real or potential breach of the peace occurred. This

² B. Urquhart, *Hammarskjöld* (London 1973), esp. 9-54, 594-596,

³ A. Orford, *International Authority and the Responsibility to Protect* (Cambridge 2011), 3-4.

⁴ Urquhart cites Hammarskjöld’s speech given on his arrival in New York on 9 April 1953 in which he stressed that the international public servant ‘is active as an instrument, a catalyst, perhaps an inspirer’. See Urquhart, *Hammarskjöld*, 15-16. Moreover, just four months before his death Hammarskjöld delivered a lecture at Oxford University providing his most comprehensive account of his view of the political function of the secretary-general. See *The International Civil Servant in Law and in Fact: A Lecture delivered to Congregation on 30 May 1961 by Dag Hammarskjöld, Secretary-General of the United Nations* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1961).

⁵ R. Russell, assisted by J. Muther, *A History of the United Nations Charter: The Role of the United States, 1940-1945* (Washington, DC 1958), 369-77.

paper, however, was uncertain whether the post-holder should be someone of high international reputation or a national of a smaller country who would likely be more impartial. Either way it was expected that the individual would focus on the chairmanship of the Executive Council and delegate the less important administrative aspects. The second paper, the Staff Charter of the United Nations, produced on 14 August 1943, granted the 'director-general' very similar political powers. In fact, the only significant difference from the Draft Constitution was that this paper emphatically stated that the office should be held by a man of international stature. In both papers, however, details regarding the post's political character were limited.

The third paper, the Tentative Proposals for a General International Organisation, was published on 18 July 1944 after much fraught debate in the State Department. Serious rethinking of this question had been triggered in December 1943 by US President Franklin D. Roosevelt's suggestion that a 'moderator' be appointed. Roosevelt envisaged a man of great personal reputation who could mediate and settle all international differences or disputes amicably and judiciously. Nevertheless, the Informal Political Agenda Group appointed to consider the President's proposal was deeply divided. Its members assumed Roosevelt desired an individual who would preside over the Executive Council and actively participate in its deliberations. A number of State Department officials supported this concept since a figure of high reputation responsible only to the new organisation would be able to represent the 'general interests' of the global community. Still, other members of the group argued that the power and authority of the Executive Council was derived from the member states and no individual had a function there.

Moreover, questions were asked over the practicalities of having an elder statesman serve as the 'president' of the new organisation.⁶ To start with, uncertainty existed over whether the office-holder should attend all Executive Council meetings or perform more of a symbolic role, only being present at great occasions. If the latter, some suggested that he also act as the presiding officer of the General Assembly which only met annually. Yet this proposal was dismissed since it was considered impossible for one man to assume both these functions. It was also deemed more important for the president to be present in the Executive Council where mediation would be more important. In addition, doubts existed over whether the president should act as the chief administrator or should a separate office be created for

⁶ Urquhart claims that the term 'moderator' was abandoned early on in the wartime deliberations because it was felt it might cause confusion with the Moderator of the Church of Scotland. See B. Urquhart, 'The Evolution of the Secretary-General', in E. May and A. Laiou (eds), *The Dumbarton Oaks Conversations and the United Nations, 1944-1994* (Washington, DC 1998), 27.

this task. The majority of the Informal Political Agenda Group preferred the creation of an additional ‘director-general’ but then questions were raised over whether this individual should be appointed by the president or be elected. If the second course was adopted, many State Department officials feared there might be a clash of authority between the two posts. Furthermore, during this period London made it clear it preferred the appointment of an impartial international civil servant – a role epitomized by the British first Secretary-General of the League of Nations, Sir Eric Drummond. Paul Hasluck, an Australian diplomat who later represented his country in the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations, also believed that, ‘the British had before their eyes the model of Sir Eric Drummond at the League of Nations and thought of the Secretary-General as a functionary for member states’.⁷ Leon Gordenker explains this Anglo-American divergence was a result of the different governmental traditions of the two countries. The League’s model had clear parallels with the British notion of a civil service kept to the background. The Americans, in contrast, were more used to a government service headed by a powerful political official whose status equalled that of the legislature.⁸

With the State Department thoroughly divided and British thinking moving in the opposite direction Roosevelt, at some point during the spring of 1944, dropped his moderator proposal seemingly agreeing that the disadvantages would outweigh whatever advantages he had originally seen.⁹ Consequently, the American Tentative Proposals produced for the upcoming Dumbarton Oaks conference simply outlined the election procedure for the director-general; stated that he would act as the organisation’s chief administrative officer; and listed a number of purely administrative duties.¹⁰ Quite clearly the US Government was not prepared to propose any explicit political powers for the office before meeting with the other major powers to gauge their views. Within the State Department, nonetheless, consensus remained that the League model was unsatisfactory. At the same time, London’s attitude shifted. The British Tentative Proposals, in fact, went further than those produced by the State Department stating that, ‘The suggestion that the head of the Secretariat should be given the right of bringing before the World Council any matter which in his opinion threatens the peace of the world might well be incorporated into the rule of the

⁷ P. Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness: Australian Foreign Affairs, 1941-1947* (Melbourne 1980), 265.

⁸ L. Gordenker, *The UN Secretary-General and Secretariat* (Abingdon 2005), 6.

⁹ Russell, *A History of the United Nations Charter*, 376.

¹⁰ *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) 1944 Volume I: General* (Washington, DC 1966), Tentative Proposals for a General International Organization, 18 July 1944, 667-8.

Organisation'.¹¹ The USSR and China, in contrast, in their respective proposals made no mention of any political powers.¹² Yet each of the four proposal papers did have one aspect in common. They all listed the Secretariat, and by inference its head, as one of the principal organs of the new international organisation.

In the surprisingly few historical monographs focusing on the Dumbarton Oaks Conference, such as the works by Robert Hilderbrand and Georg Schild,¹³ the conversations on the secretary-general's character are completely absent. Furthermore, the memoirs of key figures involved at Dumbarton Oaks say virtually nothing on discussions on the role of the secretary-general. Gladwyn Jebb, a member of the British delegation, only lists 'the powers of the secretary-general' as one of the 'extraordinary' agreements reached at the conference 'in such a relatively short time'.¹⁴ In addition, the published diaries of the head of the British delegation, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Sir Alexander Cadogan, does not mention the issue at all.¹⁵ In many ways this omission does reflect reality since such discussions were extremely limited and overshadowed by other issues.¹⁶ Indeed, it was only on the fifteenth day of the conference that the secretary-general question was raised and, even then, there appeared to be an overwhelming degree of unanimity. The three delegates present – Cadogan, American Undersecretary of State Edward Stettinius, , and Soviet Ambassador to the United States Andrei Gromyko – were all in agreement that the secretary-general should act as the chief administrative officer, chairing all meetings of the Security Council, General Assembly and Economic and Social Council, and producing an annual report on the work of the organization. Crucially, the three delegates also accepted the British suggestion that the secretary-general should be empowered to bring before the Security Council any matter he considered a threat to international peace and security. The Chinese delegate, Ambassador to the United Kingdom V. K. Wellington Koo – in separate talks with the American and British delegations since the USSR refused to participate in direct negotiations with China due to the 1941

¹¹ *FRUS 1944 Vol. I*, Tentative Proposals by the United Kingdom for a General International Organisation, 22 July 1944, 675.

¹² *FRUS 1944 Vol. I*, Memorandum on an International Security Organization, by the Soviet Union, 12 August 1944, 710; Tentative Chinese Proposals for a General International Organization, 23 August 1944, 720-1.

¹³ R. Hilderbrand, *Dumbarton Oaks: The Origins of the United Nations and the Search for Postwar Security* (London 1990); G. Schild, *Bretton Woods and Dumbarton Oaks: American Economic and Political Postwar Planning in the Summer of 1944* (New York, NY 1995).

¹⁴ G. Jebb, *The Memoirs of Lord Gladwyn* (London 1972), 149.

¹⁵ D. Dilks (ed.), *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938-1945* (London 1971).

¹⁶ *FRUS 1944 Vol. I*, Memorandum from Under Secretary of State (Stettinius) to Secretary of State (Hull), Washington, 6 September 1944, 771; Memorandum by Assistant Chief of the Division of International Security and Organization (Gerig) and Executive Secretary of the Policy Committee (Yost), Washington, 20 November 1944, 914.

Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Treaty - also supported this provision although little attention was paid to China's views. The only issue that caused even the slightest problem was the appointment procedure for the secretary-general. But the Americans, in the spirit of cooperation, accepted a Soviet proposal, backed by the British, that the Security Council should first decide on a candidate who would then be recommended to the General Assembly to cast its vote. In relation to this point, Jebb in his memoirs notes, 'A unique feature of this [Dumbarton Oaks] conference was that it was the only one in which the Russians took part with hardly any apparent *arrieres pensees* and with an obviously sincere will to reach agreement'.¹⁷

These provisions thus appeared as Chapter X in the Proposals for the Establishment of a General International Organization signed by the four delegations on 7 October 1944. Importantly, the Secretariat, headed by a 'secretary-general', was also listed in Chapter IV as one of the principal organs of the new organisation alongside the Security Council, General Assembly and an international court of justice.¹⁸ It is evident, therefore, that at Dumbarton Oaks general agreement existed that the secretary-general was to play some kind of political role in the central security function of the new organisation being created. But the four delegations, rushed for time and more concerned with other issues, kept the character of the secretary-general purposefully loose believing that details would be added when the rest of the Allied nations met to formally establish the UN.

Significantly, however, at the United Nations Conference on International Organization that commenced in San Francisco in April 1945 questions concerning the secretary-general's political powers were again pushed to the side-lines. This fact is again reflected in the lack of any mention of this issue in Jebb's memoirs and Cadogan's diaries – both members of the British delegation – as well as the memoirs of Escott Reid, a member of the Canadian delegation, and the papers of the South African Prime Minister Jan Smuts who headed his country's delegation.¹⁹ In fact, the fifty nations present accepted without any notable opposition the provision granting the secretary-general the right to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter he considered a threat to international peace and security. The general view, clearly, was that the secretary-general should be more proactive than his purely administrative League of Nations predecessor. Once more no serious discussions had taken place over what were the office's political powers. Attention focused,

¹⁷ Jebb, *The Memoirs of Lord Gladwyn*, 149.

¹⁸ *FRUS 1944 Vol. I*, Press Release Issued by Department of State, Washington, 9 October 1944, 900.

¹⁹ Jebb, *The Memoirs of Lord Gladwyn*; Dilks, *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938-1945*; E. Reid, *Radical Mandarin: The Memoirs of Escott Reid* (Toronto 1989); J. van der Poel (ed.), *Selections from the Smuts Papers – Volume VI: December, 1934-August, 1945* (Cambridge 1973).

instead, on two other serious controversies related to the secretary-general: the election procedure for the office and whether deputies should be elected. Both of these issues created fissures within the Big Four, especially between the United States and the Soviet Union. They also pitted the convening powers against a large number of smaller powers. Yet these matters were procedural and did not concern the fundamental character of the post.²⁰

Consequently, the secretary-general's office, as laid out in Chapter XV of the UN Charter signed on 26 June 1945, at first glance appears to be essentially administrative in nature. In fact, Article 97 states, 'He shall be the chief administrative officer of the Organization'. The only explicit expression of the secretary-general's political character is Article 99, authorising the office-holder to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which, in his opinion, may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security. The implied political prerogatives stemming from this article, in effect, created within the secretary-general an office that could initiate examination, if not action, on matters of peace and security. This view was certainly held by Hasluck who later wrote, 'I took the clear view as the Australian representative on the Committee of Experts that Article 99 of the Charter gave the Secretary-General a distinct and independent role'.²¹ In addition, Article 98 makes it clear that the secretary-general could be granted additional powers on an ad hoc basis to fulfil specific functions by the Security Council, General Assembly, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and Trusteeship Council.²²

Furthermore, the secretary-general was granted other implicit powers in the UN Charter. To begin with, in Article 7 the Secretariat, headed by the secretary-general, is named as one of the UN's principal organs alongside the General Assembly, Security Council, ECOSOC, and Trusteeship Council. As a result, the secretary-general's office was distinctly independent and elevated above the administrative status accorded to it by the League of Nations.²³ Moreover, the secretary-general was tacitly given co-responsibility with the principal organs to achieve the organisation's purposes, including its principal aim in Article 1.1 'to maintain international peace and security'. In practice, this clause effectively granted the secretary-general the power to act as a mediator to try to resolve problems when the other

²⁰ Reid, *Radical Mandarin*, 196, 210; Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, 267.

²¹ Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, 266.

²² For more on the secretary-general's political powers contained in the UN Charter see P. Kennedy, *The Parliament of Man: The United Nations and the Quest of World Government* (London 2006), 44; Orford, *International Authority and the Responsibility to Protect*, 10-12, 26; J. Perez de Cuellar, 'The Role of the UN Secretary-General', in A. Roberts and B. Kingsbury (eds), *United Nations, Divided World* (2nd edn, Oxford 1993), 129; Urquhart, *Hammarhjold*, 50-51; *The International Civil Servant in Law and in Fact*, 9-13.

²³ S. Schlesinger, *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations* (Oxford 2003), 240.

principal organs – notably the Security Council – could not fulfil their specified tasks.²⁴ This political role has come to be known as the secretary-general's 'good offices'.

Yet at both Dumbarton Oaks and San Francisco the UN founding fathers had proven themselves either unwilling or unable to establish detailed terms and conditions for the office of the secretary-general. As a consequence, Edward Luck has argued that if a major political role had been intended for the secretary-general then the office would have received far more attention at these formative sessions.²⁵ But this view is too simplistic and does not consider the fact that very little discussion took place, and no major controversies arose, regarding the character of the secretary-general precisely because the great and small member states agreed that the office should contain the political powers discussed above. Given this level of unanimity, these states believed that these powers would be more fully articulated in time while it was more important to thrash out their differences on other issues at the two conferences.

As a result, the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations, established at the end of the San Francisco Conference to make provisional arrangements for the first session of the UN and establish the Secretariat, tried to fill in the details regarding the secretary-general's role. Still, the discussions between the representatives of the fifty member states got bogged down in debates on the procedure for the secretary-general's appointment and the type of person desired for the post.²⁶ Additionally, as the first General Assembly swiftly approached, discussions turned to individual candidates for the office. Lester Pearson, Canadian Ambassador to the United States at the time, recalls in his memoirs being suggested by the United States and Britain although he realised that the Soviet Union would not accept a North American candidate with American and British backing. Still, Pearson, while stressing that he was not disappointed, clearly indicates his view that the post had strong political powers when he writes, 'I felt too that it was a position I could fill and one which would have given me an unrivalled opportunity to work for the things in which I believed; peace, security, and international cooperation'.²⁷ In addition, Hasluck recalls that in the Preparatory Commission

²⁴ T. Franck and G. Nolte, 'The Good Offices Function of the UN Secretary-General', in A. Roberts and B. Kingsbury (eds), *United Nations, Divided World* (2nd edn, Oxford 1993), 144-5.

²⁵ E. Luck, 'The Secretary-General in a unipolar world', in S. Chesterman (ed.), *Secretary or General?: The UN Secretary-General in World Politics* (Cambridge 2007), 204.

²⁶ *FRUS 1945 Volume I: General: The United Nations* (Washington, DC 1967), Memorandum of Conversation (Byrnes), Washington, 24 October 1945, 1461; Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, 245-246

²⁷ L. Pearson, *Mike: The Memoirs of the Right Honourable Lester B. Pearson - Volume I: 1897-1948* (Toronto 1972), 280-281.

it became clear that, 'The Soviet Union seemed to want a Secretary-General who would serve their purposes or, if that were impossible, who would have no purpose of his own'.²⁸

Nevertheless, Chapter VIII, section 2, of the Report of the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations published on 23 December 1945, is very revealing when it comes to the powers intended for the secretary-general.²⁹ This report states that the UN Charter assigned 'explicitly or by inference' six principal functions for the secretary-general. The first four – general administrative and executive functions, technical functions, financial organization, and administration of the international Secretariat – fit comfortably within the purview of the 'chief administrative officer' stipulated in Article 97. Yet political and representational functions were also included and three specifically political aspects of the position were outlined. Firstly, according to the Report, the secretary-general's administrative decisions 'may justly be called political' given their impact on the work of the organisation. Secondly, it describes Article 99 as, 'a quite special right which goes beyond any power previously accorded to the head of an international organization'. Thirdly, it restates the Rooseveltian conception of the secretary-general, 'as a mediator and as an informal adviser to many governments'. Moreover, the report discusses the secretary-general's 'moral authority' prescribed in Article 100 which outlines the 'international' nature of his office and independence from any member state. Finally, the report argues that the secretary-general 'must embody the principles and ideals of the Charter'.

By the end of 1945 a clearer sense of the character of the secretary-general had thus begun to emerge. Throughout the discussions over the previous two years, and specifically at the two wartime conferences at Dumbarton Oaks and San Francisco, the general assumption had been that the office had a political as well as an administrative element to it. The secretary-general, therefore, was intended by the UN founding fathers to play a more active role in all aspects of the organisation's work, including its security function, than its League of Nations' predecessor. Even so, it remained unclear just how far the secretary-general was able to act in times of crisis, especially if the Security Council was prevented from performing its function due to differences between the permanent members. In consequence, the character of the secretary-general's office was left to evolve during the tenure of its first incumbent.

²⁸ Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, 265.

²⁹ 'Appendix 2: The Report of the Preparatory Commission of the United Nations, 23 December 1945', in S. Chesterman (ed.), *Secretary or General?: The UN Secretary-General in World Politics* (Cambridge 2007), 243-5.

UN Secretary-General Trygve Lie was nominated unanimously by the Security Council and elected by forty-six votes to three at the first session of the General Assembly on 29 January 1946 as a compromise candidate.³⁰ Crucially, Lie was favourably regarded in Moscow despite being, in Pearson's words, 'a strong man with no liking for communism'.³¹ Nonetheless, Reid's memoirs state that many key Western actors, such as US Undersecretary of State Dean Acheson and British Minister of State Philip Noel-Baker thought Lie was 'not first-class' and feared 'he was not nearly quick enough or astute enough to tackle the work of secretary general'.³² Still, the choice of the well-known Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs who had spent the Second World War working closely with the Allies in London, rather than a career civil servant, made it clear that the permanent members expected the secretary-general to play an important political role.³³ Indeed, it was clear from that outset that Lie held liberal views of the political functions of his post, realising he had powers not enjoyed by his League of Nations predecessors. Lie thus believed that it was his duty to do all he could, 'to uphold the [UN] Charter and to make the United Nations work as a force for peace'.³⁴ James Muldoon argues convincingly that these expansive views were the result of an entwining of Lie's personal values – developed throughout his upbringing in relative poverty and Lutheran education, his career as a trade unionist and socialist politician, and as Norwegian Foreign Minister-in-exile between 1940 and 1945 – and the norms of international law that the Charter imposed upon his office.³⁵

Lie consequently assumed an outspoken role as numerous post-war issues came before the UN, including Iran, Indonesia, Kashmir, Greece, Palestine, Berlin, China and East-West relations. In consequence, during his first term, Lie established a number of important practices for the office of the secretary-general. This process had not been easy, though, since many of his initiatives had generated friction with the major powers, especially the United States.³⁶ However, it was following the outbreak of the Korean War – the first time the UN

³⁰ Hasluck writes, 'Before long the situation was faced that the job was not to find the best man available but the best Scandinavian available'. See Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, 246.

³¹ Pearson, *Mike*, 280.

³² Reid, *Radical Mandarin*, 207-208.

³³ L. Goodrich, 'The Political Role of the Secretary-General', *International Organization*, 16, 4 (1962), 721.

³⁴ *Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscript Library*, Cordier Collection, Box 205, Korea (I) 1950-51 (T.L.), Transcript of Press Conference Held by Mr. Trygve Lie, New York, 14 July 1950.

³⁵ J. Muldoon, 'The House that Trygve Lie Built: Ethical Challenges as the First UN Secretary-General', in K. Kille (ed.), *The UN Secretary-General and Moral Authority: Ethics and Religion in International Leadership* (Washington, DC 2007), 69.

³⁶ For more on Lie's activities as secretary-general prior to the Korean War see, for example, J. Barros, *Trygve Lie and the Cold War: The UN Secretary-General Pursues Peace, 1946-1953* (DeKalb, IL 1989), 68-250; A. Gaglione, *The United Nations Under Trygve Lie, 1945-1953* (London 2001), 43-64, 121-5; T. Lie, *In the Cause of Peace: Seven Years with the United Nations* (New York, NY 1954), 74-322; E. Ravndal, 'The First Major

faced a breach of international peace and security that risked escalating into a global conflict – that Lie became most actively involved in the fulfilment of the UN’s principal security functions. Just before midnight on 24 June 1950 Lie was informed of the North Korean attack across the 38th parallel by the US State Department.³⁷ His immediate reaction was to request a report to clarify the situation from the UN Commission on Korea (UNCOK), a body established two years earlier to oversee elections and bring about the peaceful unification of the peninsula.³⁸ Lie also claims in his memoirs to have decided at that moment to summon the Security Council using his Article 99 powers.³⁹ Yet at 3am US Ambassador Ernest Gross telephoned Lie to formally submit a request for an emergency session of the Security Council later that day.⁴⁰ International lawyer and former judge of the International Court of Justice, Bruno Simma, therefore, argues persuasively that Lie could no longer invoke Article 99.⁴¹

Still, Lie’s next action demonstrated that he was acting in the spirit of Article 99. He broke with tradition and opened the emergency Security Council meeting, delivering a passionate speech.⁴² He began by relaying the report just received from UNCOK concluding that North Korean forces had crossed the 38th parallel without provocation and indicated that a situation was developing which was assuming the character of a full-scale war and endangered the maintenance of international peace and stability.⁴³ Lie went on to argue that it was the ‘clear duty’ of the Security Council to respond to this act of aggression.⁴⁴

As secretary-general, Lie was under no obligation to comment on UNCOK’s report but by doing so he put the full weight and prestige of his office behind the subsequent decisions taken by the Security Council.⁴⁵ So why did Lie take this unprecedented initiative? Lie’s biographers James Barros and Anthony Gaglione argue that Lie acted under American pressure and to appease American public opinion.⁴⁶ But Andrew Cordier and Wilder Foote, two of Lie’s closest Secretariat advisers at the time, state that Lie felt obliged to take this

Test”: The UN Secretary-General and the Palestine Question, 1947-9”, *The International History Review*, 38, 1 (2016), 196-213.

³⁷ *FRUS 1950 Volume VII: Korea* (Washington, DC 1976), Editorial Note, 11:30 p.m., 24 June 1950, 127.

³⁸ *United Nations Archives and Records Management Service (UNARMS)*, S-0018-0009-01, Lie to UNCOK (Renborg), New York, 25 June 1950.

³⁹ Lie, *In the Cause of Peace*, 328-9.

⁴⁰ *FRUS 1950 Vol. VII*, Editorial Note, 3:00 a.m., 25 June 1950, 131.

⁴¹ B. Simma, *The Charter of the United Nations: A Commentary* (Oxford 1994), 1051-2.

⁴² *United Nations Security Council Official Records Fifth year No. 15*, 473rd Meeting, New York, 25 June 1950, 1-15

⁴³ *UNARMS*, S-0018-0008-08, Renborg to Lie, Seoul, 25 June 1950.

⁴⁴ *National Archives of Norway*, PA-1407 Lie, Trygve, Box 4, Press Release SG/104, Statement by the Secretary-General at a Meeting of the Security Council, New York, 25 June 1950.

⁴⁵ A. Cordier and W. Foote (eds), *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations – Volume I: Trygve Lie, 1946-1953* (New York, NY 1969), 20-1.

⁴⁶ Barros, *Trygve Lie and the Cold War*, 274-5; Gaglione, *The United Nations under Trygve Lie*, 67.

stand since in his mind the attack on South Korea – a country established by the UN only two years earlier – was akin to the Nazi invasion of Norway in 1940. Lie thus passionately believed that aggression had to be countered to prevent a slide into general war and to maintain the UN's authority.⁴⁷ Gross supports this position later recalling that during his telephone call with Lie early on 25 June 1950 the Secretary-General made it clear to him that the UN had to react or else it would go the way of the League of Nations.⁴⁸ Furthermore, on 30 July 1950 Lie told Pearson, now Canadian Secretary of State for External Affairs, that he had acted since, 'there was no hope of peace being preserved unless the North Korean aggression could be contained and thrown back'. Lie, 'now talking about the problem of preserving peace in terms that one might have expected from a signatory of the North Atlantic Pact rather than from the Secretary General of the United Nations' also Pearson of the need for the UN to establish its own 'police force' or else in '10 or 15 years we would all be slaves'.⁴⁹

It is difficult to judge, however, exactly how important Lie's intervention was to the adoption of Security Council Resolution 82 identifying a breach of the peace and calling on North Korean forces to cease hostilities and withdraw to the 38th parallel. The other permanent members present, as well as three of the non-permanent members, were allies of the United States and were keen to support Washington's proposal. Yet Lie's actions certainly helped to convince the Egyptian and Indian delegates to temporarily abandon neutrality and vote in the affirmative. In fact, only the Yugoslavian delegation failed to support the resolution, arguing that no decision should be taken until the facts became clearer. But Lie's initiative would clearly have come to nothing if the Soviet Union had not been boycotting the Security Council over its decision six months earlier to continue recognising the Guomindang regime in Taipei, rather than Mao Zedong's victorious Communists in Beijing, as the legitimate government of China. Moreover, it is hard to imagine the Secretary-General putting his personal reputation and office on the line if a Soviet veto had been inevitable.

Over the next forty-eight hours, nevertheless, it became clear that Pyongyang would not halt its military advance. Lie had no direct influence over the formulation or adoption of the US-sponsored Security Council Resolution 83 on 27 June 1950 which recommended that the UN members furnish assistance to South Korea to repel the armed attack and restore

⁴⁷ Cordier and Foote (eds), *Public Papers of the Secretaries-General of the United Nations*, 20-1.

⁴⁸ *Yale University Library Manuscript Collections*, Group No.1703, UN Oral History Project Interview Transcripts and Tapes, Box 3, Folder 69 Gross, Ernest [Korean War] 1990 Apr 12, 4.

⁴⁹ L. Pearson, *Memoirs, 1948-1957 - Volume II: The International Years* (London 1974), 154-155.

international peace and security.⁵⁰ Still, Lie believed that the terms of this resolution gave him executive powers to seek and receive offers of military assistance from the member states. Lie thus worked closely with the US delegation to draft a cable sent to all the member states requesting them to furnish him with ‘early information’ about ‘the type of help’ they could offer.⁵¹ Lie also attempted to influence events informally at this time. During a car journey returning from a function Lie asked Soviet Ambassador Jakov Malik to come with him to the UN Headquarters to take up the Soviet seat in the Security Council. Lie evidently believed that if the Soviet Union could be brought back to the Security Council then a solution to the Korean problem could be found. Malik, however, declined the offer and got out of the car.⁵²

Meanwhile, with the battlefield situation becoming dire Lie came to realize that some kind of machinery needed to be established to utilize the assistance rendered by the member states. He prepared, accordingly, a memorandum requesting that the US Government assume responsibility for directing the UN armed forces. This memorandum also recommended the creation of a Committee on Coordination of Assistance for Korea made up of the other contributing members.⁵³ Lie’s ‘deeper purpose’ for his memorandum was to keep the UN ‘in the picture’ and prevent Washington completely dominating the collective security action.⁵⁴ Unsurprisingly, though, the Truman administration opposed outright the committee concept since it did not want to share responsibility with other states.⁵⁵ Consequently, Lie dropped this proposal but the other aspects of his memorandum chimed well with American thinking and were largely incorporated into their third draft resolution. Security Council Resolution 84, therefore, was adopted recommending that member states make contributions available to a unified command under the US Government.⁵⁶

This decision effectively marked the conclusion of the establishment of the UN’s first collective security action but Lie was not prepared to rest on his laurels. He worked closely with the US delegation to try to find a method to ensure that as many member states as

⁵⁰ *United Nations Security Council Official Records Fifth Year No. 16*, 474th Meeting, New York, 27 June 1950, 3-16.

⁵¹ *FRUS 1950 Vol. VII*, US Permanent Representative to the UN (Austin) to Secretary of State (Acheson), New York, 28 June 1950, 225.

⁵² Lie, *In the Cause of Peace*, 333.

⁵³ *FRUS 1950 Vol. VII*, Memorandum of Conversation (Noyes), New York, 30 June 1950, 264-5.

⁵⁴ *National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)*, RG84/350/82/4/2 E.1030-F, Box 24, Tel-Out 551d-572d 6.28.50-7.1.50, Austin to Acheson, New York, 29 June 1950.

⁵⁵ *FRUS 1950 Vol. VII*, Memorandum of Conversation (Ross), New York, 28 June 1950, 221-22; Acheson to Austin, Washington, DC, 4 July 1950, 299-301.

⁵⁶ *United Nations Security Council Official Records Fifth Year No. 18*, 476th Meeting, New York, 7 July 1950, 3-11.

possible contributed forces.⁵⁷ Lie thus sent a note to all the members requesting offers of ground forces that he would then transmit to the US Government. Lie took this action since he felt members would more likely respond to requests from him than from Washington.⁵⁸ Many states, however, were annoyed with Lie's note since they did not have forces available but felt embarrassed to give a negative response.⁵⁹ London and Paris, in particular, were upset that they had not been consulted and complained to the Americans that Lie had over-stepped his authority.⁶⁰ A week later, in response to these reproaches, Lie told Pearson of his meeting with the US delegation at which it, 'was put to him that the matter was one of the highest gravity and urgency, and that effective Congressional and political support of the United Nations would be put in jeopardy if United States military action in opposing aggression appeared to be isolated and unsupported by other members of the United Nations'. Lie had thus agreed that the appeal for ground forces would be more effective coming from him but he was given to understand that the US delegation would inform other members of the reasons behind the initiative being done in this way. Lie was, therefore, disappointed that he had gone 'ahead with his share of the arrangement...and taken a good deal of bruising' while the US delegation had not taken 'any of the complementary actions'.⁶¹

The Secretary-General, while unperturbed by the criticism he received, was, however, deeply disappointed with the few positive replies sent and the token offers made. All the same, Lie suggested making use of volunteers – especially from smaller countries that could not spare their own forces – and forming international brigades under American command. The Truman administration, however, shunned this idea since it would require special Congressional legislation which would prove controversial. Lie, therefore, did not push this proposal.⁶² Even so, by early August 1950 fifteen member states had made military contributions giving the force something of a UN flavour. Yet over ninety percent of the troops were American. Also, these states contributed forces mainly to build closer ties with Washington. Still, Lie's public requests and his persistence helped pile pressure on members

⁵⁷ NARA, RG84/350/82/1/4 E.1030-F, Box 45, Korea (July-August 1950), Memorandum of Conversation (Ross), New York, 10 July 1950.

⁵⁸ NARA, RG84/350/82/4/2 E.1030-F, Box 24, Tel Out 55-125 (July 13, 1950-July 26, 1950), Austin to Acheson, New York, 14 July 1950.

⁵⁹ *FRUS 1950 Vol. VII*, Memorandum of Conversation (Hyde), New York, 18 July 1950, 416.

⁶⁰ NARA, RG84/350/82/4/2 E.1030-F, Box 24, Tel Out 55-125 (July 13, 1950-July 26, 1950), Daily Classified Summary No.14, Austin to Acheson, New York, 22 July 1950.

⁶¹ Pearson, *Memoirs, 1948-1957*, 155-156.

⁶² NARA, RG84/350/82/1/4 E.1030-F, Box 45, Korea (July-August 1950), Memorandum of Conversation (Bender), New York, 20 July 1950.

and facilitated their offers, particularly from states such as Canada and France who had shown little enthusiasm beforehand.⁶³

Over the next month Lie remained quiet since nothing could be done while UN forces fought desperately to retain a position in Korea. But activity in New York was reinvigorated in mid-September 1950 following the UN Command's daring amphibious landings at Inchon. Almost immediately the course of the war shifted in favour of the UN and by the end of the month North Korea had been forced back to the 38th parallel. With military victory imminent the General Assembly considered how the UN could achieve its long-standing political objective of unifying Korea. Lie was determined to voice his opinion on this matter and drafted a working paper entitled Suggested Terms of Settlement of the Korean Question. This proposal promoted an immediate cease-fire at the 38th parallel followed by the demilitarization of North Korea. UNCOK and UN relief personnel would then enter the north and lay the necessary foundations for free elections throughout Korea to establish a new national government. If Pyongyang refused these terms UN forces would cross the 38th parallel and occupy North Korea until elections could be held.⁶⁴

The US delegation to the General Assembly, however, had other ideas in mind. The Americans agreed that all-Korea elections should be held and for this purpose proposed the creation of a UN Commission for the Unification and Rehabilitation of Korea (UNCURK) to supersede UNCOK. But the Truman administration, buoyant after the military successes in Korea, insisted that UNCURK could only be effective if UN forces were first permitted to cross the 38th parallel and reunify the country.⁶⁵ A draft resolution embodying these principles was thus produced and was overwhelmingly adopted despite Indian warnings that China would intervene if UN forces crossed the 38th parallel. Clearly, Lie's efforts had been ignored. It is interesting to note, though, that Lie had not pushed his suggestions with much vigour since, with victory seemingly in sight, he shared Washington's hubris.⁶⁶

In the meantime, the Soviet delegation had returned to take up its seat at the UN. While attacking the collective security action in Korea in general, Moscow focused specific criticism on Lie, claiming he had acted beyond the powers granted him as secretary-general. Furthermore, Lie was accused of collaborating with Washington and abetting in the decisions which authorized American aggression in Korea. In October 1950, therefore, with Lie's five-

⁶³ Lie, *In the Cause of Peace*, 336-40.

⁶⁴ *FRUS 1950 Vol. VII*, Austin to Acheson, New York, 29 September 1950, 824-5.

⁶⁵ *FRUS 1950 Vol. VII*, Minutes 4th Meeting US Delegation to the UN General Assembly, New York, 21 September 1950, 743-7.

⁶⁶ Lie, *In the Cause of Peace*, 344-5; Gaglione, *The United Nations under Trygve Lie*, 71.

year tenure as secretary-general due to expire, the Soviet government sought to prevent him being re-elected. Yet Lie's stand on Korea had gained him American support and the Truman administration was determined to prevent him being forced out by Moscow. Importantly, Lie agreed, if somewhat reluctantly, that he should stay on as secretary-general to prevent a Soviet victory that would inevitably curtail the powers of his successors.⁶⁷ The Security Council, in consequence, became deadlocked since the Soviet delegation vetoed Lie's candidacy while the Americans refused to accept anyone else. In a blatant evasion of Charter procedure the matter was eventually taken up by the General Assembly where it was recommended that Lie continue in his post for three more years.⁶⁸ This decision did temporarily resolve the issue although Moscow thereafter refused to recognize Lie as secretary-general.

The question remains whether the Soviet arguments had any merit. His proactive stance certainly went far beyond the actions of a chief administrator and anything he had done before. But, as was established above, the UN founding fathers had intended far-reaching political powers for the office of secretary-general. Lie may have been denied the opportunity of employing Article 99 but his subsequent decisions to ask for the report from UNCOK and to support the case for action in the Security Council were well within the prerogatives inferred in this provision. In addition, Lie's efforts to ensure that the military force being created had a genuine UN composition demonstrated his desire to act alongside the Security Council in achieving the UN's primary purpose of maintaining international peace and security. The Secretary-General was thus fulfilling the political role assigned to him as one of the UN's principal organs.

Yet the Soviet criticism of Lie's relationship with the United States does have some validity. In fact, Barros goes as far as to claim that Lie was a 'lackey of the Western camp'.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, while Lie clearly did work extremely closely with the US delegation throughout the first months of the Korean War, he did not receive instructions from Washington and was not in breach of Article 100 of the UN Charter. His relationship with the US delegation was inevitably close since his personal convictions were very similar to those of the Truman administration. What is more, only Washington was willing to take the lead in the Security Council and in sending forces to Korea. Lie consequently had little choice but to act with the Americans to fulfil the UN's objectives. Disagreements also did exist between Lie and the

⁶⁷ Lie, *In the Cause of Peace*, 369-71.

⁶⁸ *United Nations General Assembly Official Records Fifth Session Plenary Meetings*, 296th Meeting, New York, 31 October 1950, 250-262.

⁶⁹ Barros, *Trygve Lie and the Cold War*, 259.

US delegation. Invariably in such instances Lie backed down but this did not demonstrate that he was an American puppet. It merely reflected the fact that the secretary-general's powers are purely advisory.

The second stage of the Korean War commenced with the arrival of Chinese forces in late October 1950. Initially, it appeared only a few thousand Chinese soldiers had crossed the border. But in late November Beijing launched a massive offensive forcing the UN Command to retreat. At this point the General Assembly took up the Korean question at the United States' request. This course was made possible by the adoption on 3 November 1950 of General Assembly Resolution 377, commonly known as the Uniting for Peace Resolution. This wide-ranging resolution was proposed by the US delegation, without any notable input from Lie, and included the provision that if the Security Council failed to exercise its primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security due to a lack of unanimity among the permanent members, the General Assembly would immediately consider the matter and make recommendations.⁷⁰ Still, in New York grave fears quickly emerged over what action the United States would take and whether this might lead to the Korean War escalating into a global conflict. In this crisis – the most serious of the early Cold War period – Lie was not prepared to stand back. His ability to act, however, was now severely constrained by the enmity of the Soviet Union. As a result, Lie sought to use his good offices, the one power left at his disposal, to mediate a ceasefire and end the fighting.⁷¹

To achieve his goal Lie met on nine occasions with General Wu Hsiu-chan, a Chinese representative present in New York to discuss the future of Taiwan. At first Wu ignored Lie's urgings for China to withdraw its forces from Korea.⁷² But at their fourth meeting Wu hinted that his government wanted peace and would appreciate Lie's help ascertaining the ceasefire conditions of the UN Command.⁷³ What is more, Wu indicated that he preferred to discuss such matters with Lie than the Cease-fire Committee – composed of the Iranian President of the General Assembly, Nasrollah Entezam, Pearson of Canada, and Indian Permanent Representatives Sir Benegal Rau – appointed by the General Assembly.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, Lie

⁷⁰ *United Nations General Assembly Official Records Fifth Session Plenary*, 302nd Meeting, New York, 3 November 1950, 347.

⁷¹ *FRUS 1950 Vol. VII*, Austin to Acheson, New York, 3 December 1950, 1342.

⁷² *FRUS 1950 Vol. VII*, Austin to Acheson, New York, 4 December 1950, 1378.

⁷³ *FRUS 1950 Vol. VII*, Austin to Acheson, New York, 9 December 1950, 1495.

⁷⁴ *United Nations General Assembly Official Record Fifth Session Plenary*, 324th Meeting, New York, 14 December 1950, 655.

kept the Cease-fire Committee fully informed of his 'tough' and 'depressing' discussions with Wu as is demonstrated by Pearson's diary.⁷⁵

The Chinese offensive in Korea, meanwhile, had halted at the 38th parallel indicating Beijing had achieved its objectives. Lie thus interpreted these developments as a direct challenge to him to act as a mediator.⁷⁶ Nonetheless, when Lie probed further the talks with Wu quickly broke down. Wu refused to accept that the Chinese forces fighting in Korea were anything more than 'volunteers' and stressed that the UN should negotiate with the North Korean authorities. To make matters worse, Wu stated that Beijing would only negotiate if it was first agreed that the PRC would be admitted to the UN; Taiwan would come under its sovereignty; all foreign forces would be withdrawn from Korea; and American aggression in East Asia would cease.⁷⁷ Wu then revealed that he had been instructed to depart New York. Despite these clear signals, Lie tried to convince Wu to stay and stressed that he continued to be available to mediate in the future. According to Pearson's diary Lie, 'told them that they were in danger of precipitating war if they broke off like this, because it would be interpreted here that the Chinese Communist Government had no interest in bringing the war in Korea to an end'. Lie also urged the Chinese delegation to meet with the Cease-fire Committee but they refused to do so indicating that 'these great matters of peace and war' could only be decided at a meeting of Mao, Stalin and Truman.⁷⁸ But behind-the-scenes Lie had given up hope convinced that the Chinese delegation was taking orders from Moscow. He told Pearson the Cease-fire Committee should now admit failure and the question of what action should be taken against the Chinese could then be referred to the Collective Measures Committee set up in the Uniting for Peace Resolution.⁷⁹ At the same time, Lie encouraged the US delegation to press on with its draft resolution demanding the withdrawal of Chinese forces from Korea.⁸⁰

Lie was undoubtedly deeply frustrated with his failed attempt to mediate a ceasefire with Wu.⁸¹ Yet in the circumstances the odds were heavily stacked against him. Not only had he become persona non grata with the Soviet Union, the likelihood of Beijing negotiating a ceasefire while its forces in Korea were humiliating the UN Command was extremely

⁷⁵ Pearson, *Memoirs, 1948-1957*, 280-281.

⁷⁶ Lie, *In the Cause of Peace*, 354.

⁷⁷ *National Archives of the United Kingdom*, FO371/84135, British Permanent Representative to the UN (Jebb) to Foreign Office, New York, 14 December 1950.

⁷⁸ Pearson, *Memoirs, 1948-1957*, 280-281.

⁷⁹ Pearson, *Memoirs, 1948-1957*, 282-284.

⁸⁰ *FRUS 1950 Vol. VII*, Austin to Acheson, New York, 16 December 1950, 1558-61.

⁸¹ Lie, *In the Cause of Peace*, 351-7.

limited.⁸² Similarly, even if Wu had been willing to talk, Washington was in no mood to make compromises with domestic and international opinion shifting against the United States. It is interesting to note, though, that Lie's attempts to use his good offices were largely accepted without protest. Why, then, did these actions create far less controversy than Lie's role during the first few months of the Korean War?

To begin with, the concept of the secretary-general acting as a mediator had existed since the earliest wartime discussions and featured most prominently in Roosevelt's moderator proposal. This idea may not have been discussed in any detail at Dumbarton Oaks or San Francisco. But it is implied by the fact the secretary-general is one of the principal organs of the UN and shares equal responsibility to uphold the aims and principles of the organisation. In addition, the 1945 Preparatory Commission's report plainly describes the secretary-general as 'a mediator'. Furthermore, Lie's efforts to negotiate with Wu were quite clearly not undertaken at the behest of Washington and the proposals he made were his own. In fact, the US delegation did not encourage Lie's endeavours since the Truman administration remained ambiguous over whether it desired an end to the fighting at all. For the US government it was essential to first have China branded an aggressor. Lie could thus hardly be accused by the Soviets of partiality.

After Wu's departure from New York the Chinese offensive was renewed on New Year's Eve. Then on 1 February 1951, with UN forces retreating south of the 38th parallel, the United States successfully pushed for the PRC to be branded an aggressor by the General Assembly.⁸³ Yet no escalatory measures were taken by Washington and the military situation slowly began to improve. By late spring the UN Command had pushed the Communist armies back to the status quo ante bellum. Lie – who had been largely absent as these military events unfolded – thus concluded that the time was again ripe to exercise his political powers and attempt to facilitate a ceasefire.

To achieve these ends in June 1951 Lie circulated a memorandum, entitled *Ideas Concerning Attainment of a Cease-fire in Korea*, proposing the field commanders negotiate a strictly military armistice without any political preconditions.⁸⁴ While this proposal met considerable interest, the US delegation argued that it was untimely since the military

⁸² Barros, *Trygve Lie and the Cold War*, 300.

⁸³ *United Nations General Assembly Official Record Fifth Session Plenary*, 327th Meeting, New York, 1 February 1951, 692-696

⁸⁴ NARA, RG84/350/82/1/4 E.1030-D, Box 46, Korea (Jan to Dec 1951), Ross to Hickerson and Rusk, New York, 13 June 1951.

situation in Korea remained uncertain. Lie reacted strongly to this accusing the Truman administration of being 'in a coma' since the decline in public support for the war.⁸⁵ Lie did convince Washington, nevertheless, that a further request by him for ground troops might convince the Communists to accept a ceasefire for fear the strengthened UN Command would push northwards.⁸⁶

It is easy to see, therefore, why Lie in his memoirs claims credit for Malik's statement made the following day on the UN radio programme 'Price of Peace' in which the Soviet Ambassador essentially accepted his proposal for purely military negotiations.⁸⁷ This opening was then swiftly seized upon by Washington and armistice negotiations got underway between the military commanders in Korea on 11 July 1951. Lie, however, undoubtedly exaggerates the importance of his role since the US and Soviet governments had been working toward this goal for two months. Even so, prior to Lie's intervention both sides had struggled to find a breakthrough since neither wished to appear to be suing for peace. In the tense climate of the early Cold War, in which prestige was so important, Lie's memorandum established a procedure that both sides could accept without losing face.

Interestingly, Lie's role in facilitating the ceasefire negotiations induced far less criticism than his actions at the start of the conflict. Evidently, Moscow was willing to accept Lie's meddling if he was clearly acting within the political parameters originally intended for the secretary-general's office. Indeed, Lie's memorandum was a subtle method of mediation between the two superpowers helping them to achieve something they both desired. Few could argue that he had overstepped what was expected of him or that he was acting for the benefit of any one state or group of states. Moreover, with the truce talks now underway Lie believed that he had finally achieved his primary objective since China had intervened in Korea. As a result, he accepted there was little more he could do and willingly left the negotiations in American hands, confident the fighting would soon end.⁸⁸

The opening of the armistice negotiations marked Lie's final significant contribution regarding Korea. Over the next year he became increasingly frustrated when the truce talks broke down and came to regret his decision to remain in office since the Soviet boycott curtailed his activities to a small part of the political role intended for the secretary-general.⁸⁹

⁸⁵ NARA, RG84/350/82/1/4 E.1030-D, Box 46, Korea (Jan to Dec 1951), Gross to Hickerson and Rusk, New York, 15 June 1951.

⁸⁶ *FRUS 1951 Volume VII: Korea and China* (Washington DC 1983), Gross to Acheson, New York, 22 June 1951, 546.

⁸⁷ Lie, *In the Cause of Peace*, 362-4.

⁸⁸ *FRUS 1951 Vol. VII*, Gross to Acheson, New York, 28 June 1951, 241.

⁸⁹ Lie, *In the Cause of Peace*, 383-5.

Consequently, Lie resigned on 10 November 1952, less than two years into his extended term stressing that with the Korean ceasefire talks nearing completion, a new secretary-general who was the unanimous choice of the big powers would help the UN to save the peace.⁹⁰ Still, it proved extremely difficult to find a replacement acceptable to the permanent members. Pearson, whom Lie had submitted his resignation to as the current President of the General Assembly and who was Lie's choice to replace him, believed that, if it was impossible to find a successor, Lie might have been persuaded to remain in office. In fact, when the Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs, Andrey Vyshinsky made it abundantly clear that Pearson's candidature was unacceptable Lie telephoned Pearson, 'to congratulate me on joining him as an object of a Russian veto and...he seemed to me to rather relish the prospect of now being begged to stay on'.⁹¹ Yet Jebb understood that this 'position was both irregular and rather unsatisfactory' and since 'a Scandinavian had, in principle, a better chance than most of being acceptable to all, we might think of Dag Hammarskjöld...whose record, I knew, was impeccable' Jebb thus suggested Hammarskjöld to the French delegation that formally proposed him.⁹²

Jebb's assumptions proved correct and on 7 April 1953 Hammarskjöld, a relatively unknown Swedish diplomat, was elected as a compromise candidate.⁹³ Hammarskjöld, who himself later joked that his name was 'picked out of a hat',⁹⁴ crucially, was perceived as being apolitical and someone who would not test the political powers of his office as his predecessor had done. In fact, Urquhart writes that Lie opposed Hammarskjöld's appointment precisely for this reason believing that the Swede 'would be no more than a clerk'.⁹⁵ And these views initially appeared to be borne out since during the final months of fighting in Korea before the Armistice was signed on 27 July 1953 Hammarskjöld kept a low profile.

Trygve Lie's tenure, therefore, ended with the apparent acceptance by both Cold War camps that it was desirable that the office of secretary-general be essentially administrative in character. Yet it was the principal states represented at Dumbarton Oaks that had abandoned their original positions regarding the political role of the secretary-general rather than Lie

⁹⁰ *United Nations General Assembly Official Records Seventh Session Plenary Meetings*, 392nd Meeting, New York, 10 November 1952, 187.

⁹¹ Pearson, *Memoirs, 1948-1957*, 129-130.

⁹² Jebb, *The Memoirs of Lord Gladwyn*, 256-257.

⁹³ *United Nations General Assembly Official Records Seventh Session Plenary Meetings*, 423rd Meeting, New York, 7 April 1953, 679.

⁹⁴ Urquhart, *Hammarskjöld*, 12.

⁹⁵ Urquhart, *Hammarskjöld*, 15.

acting beyond the powers consistently envisaged for his office between 1943 and 1945. Many of Lie's actions in helping to shape the UN's response to the Korea crisis were certainly without precedent given the reasonably short history of the world organisation. But, as has been demonstrated, in each case Lie's actions can be connected back to the wartime discussions on the secretary-general and the powers granted to this office either explicitly or implicitly in the UN Charter. In spite of the fact they said so little regarding their intentions for this post, the UN's founding fathers would not have been surprised or appalled by Lie's actions during the Korean War. From the outset the Big Four – and later the smaller powers – all appeared to be in agreement that the secretary-general, as head of the Secretariat, should act as one of the UN's principal organs and thus had an equal role to play alongside the Security Council, General Assembly, ECOSOC, and the Trusteeship Council in fulfilling the organisation's aims and purposes. Furthermore, the delegates at Dumbarton Oaks and San Francisco granted the secretary-general a very specific security function by authorising him to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which he believed threatened international peace and security. Quite clearly the secretary-general was never intended to be solely the UN's chief administrator even though his powers had not been fully articulated.

So why then did Lie's proactive stance during the Korean War create so much controversy? To begin with, the atmosphere of cooperation present during the Second World War had long since evaporated by 1950. In these circumstances, Stalin refused to consider Lie's actions in terms of the UN Charter and instead viewed him through Cold War lenses. The Secretary-General was thus seen to be siding with the United States against the Soviet Union. In turn, Washington attempted to use Lie as a pawn to legitimize its policy at the UN and to antagonize Moscow. Lie also abetted in his own downfall. Not only did he fail to realize how some of his actions could be misconstrued as partiality towards the Americans, his public and often confrontational style antagonized many member states who thought that the secretary-general should be a strictly behind-the-scenes operator. Once the dust had settled on the Korean War, nonetheless, Dag Hammarskjöld followed many of the practices established by his predecessor, testing even further the parameters of the political powers granted to him. Undoubtedly, therefore, Lie's actions in 1950-1 were instrumental in fleshing-out the office of the secretary-general into something close to what had been intended by the UN's founders over half a decade earlier and what exists today. Hasluck's final analysis of Lie, therefore, still rings true: 'The role of the Secretary-General was shaped by Lie and his successors owed much to the way he shaped it...Lie may have been clumsy

sometimes in the way he handled a situation but he did establish that the Secretary-General had his own part to play in an international situation and was not a puppet'.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Hasluck, *Diplomatic Witness*, 265-266.