

Nasrani on the mainland and on the islands of Tiran and Sanafir. This enabled Egypt to apply an embargo on certain types of cargo bound for Elath, as certain types of cargo bound for Israeli ports were prevented from passing through the Suez Canal. When Israeli forces occupied Ras Nasrani in November 1956 the Straits were opened to all Israeli or other ships proceeding to Elath. The significance of the retention of forces in this area is, therefore, self-evident.

The other area not included in the plans for withdrawal conveyed to the Secretary-General on January 15 was the Gaza strip, which runs for some thirty miles along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. This area, which had been part of the mandated territory of Palestine, was occupied by Egyptian forces in May 1948, and to it came some 200,000 Arab refugees from other parts of Palestine. In the armistice agreement of February 24, 1949 it was provided that the strip could be occupied by Egyptian forces until the conclusion of a peace settlement. Thus, while the occupying authority assumed responsibility for civil administration in this area, which was occupied by Palestinian Arabs, during the temporary regime, the question of sovereignty was not involved. During the hostilities in 1956 Israeli forces entered the Gaza strip; but by the time of the Secretary-General's report of January 15 no indication had been given of plans for withdrawal. The Government of Israel had said only that it was prepared "at an early stage" to discuss with the Secretary-General "proposals for arrangements for the Gaza strip". The concern of Israel in the Gaza strip was the apprehension that it would again be used as a base for armed raids into Israeli territory.

It had been recognized by the Assembly that the United Nations Emergency Force was an essential element in the process of securing tranquillity in the Middle East. It had been established to "secure and supervise" the cessation of hostilities. Subsequently the Secretary-General, in a report later approved by the Assembly, said that "the functions of the UN force would be, when a cease-fire is being established, to enter Egyptian territory with the consent of the Egyptian Government, in order to help maintain quiet during and after the withdrawal of non-Egyptian troops, and to secure compliance with this and other terms established in the resolution of 2 November 1956". The cease-fire itself had been achieved; but there was still a longer process, related both to the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops within the armistice lines and to the possibility of renewed hostilities, whether on a local or wider scale. In the resolution of November 7 and in the Secretary-General's report on which that resolution was based<sup>(1)</sup>, it was made clear that UNEF could enter national territory only with the consent of the government concerned; that its duties were defined and limited by Assembly resolutions; and that it was "more than an observers' corps, but in no way a military force temporarily controlling the territory in which it is stationed".

The arrangements for the clearance of the Canal, as they stood at the beginning of the year, were described in some detail in the *Second Report of the Secretary-General on the clearing of the Suez Canal* (A/3492, January 10). After rehearsing the development of plans from November 2, the report includes three documents of interest: a summary of plans, letters constituting an agreement between the United Nations and the Government of Egypt, and a Note on financing.

<sup>(1)</sup> *The Crisis in the Middle East, October-December, 1956*, pp. 14-15.