

This is all the more desirable because after Israel's withdrawal, the United Nations should, in our view and by agreement with Egypt, accept responsibility to the maximum possible extent for establishing and maintaining civil administration in the territory; in fostering economic development and social welfare, in maintaining law and order. UNRWA is already there, with an experienced and efficient administrative nucleus. The United Nations could also provide other help through the United Nations Technical Assistance machinery, the resources of its secretariat, and expert consultants recruited for specific purposes. In this way there would be built up in Gaza, in co-operation, I hope, with Egypt and with Israel, a United Nations civil administration.

To co-ordinate and make effective arrangements to this end the Secretary-General might decide to appoint a United Nations Commissioner for Gaza. Working with the Commander of UNEF and the Director of UNRWA, and after consultation with Egyptian and Israeli representatives as well as with refugee and other local Arab leaders, he could arrange to bring about with all possible speed the replacement of the present Israeli civil administration of the area.

In this way, and perhaps in this way only, we should be able to effect the withdrawal of Israel, with order and speed, and in such a manner as to protect the interests of the inhabitants, and of both Egypt and Israel as well.

After the replacement had been completed, this United Nations Commissioner should, in my view, remain in Gaza where he would have chief responsibility for all United Nations activities there, including those of UNEF inside the strip. He would be concerned with the supervision of the Armistice Agreement, including maintenance of the cease-fire observers' functions and checking and reporting on alleged incidents of violation. In discharging these responsibilities he would work through UNEF rather than the Truce Supervisory Organization, though this would be without prejudice, of course, to the role of that organization in the other three Armistice Agreements.

In view of the status of the Gaza strip, however, as an area not belonging to the sovereign territory of any neighbouring State, any arrangement for the administration of the territory such as that which I have ventured to outline above must be considered as an interim measure pending final agreement as to the proper disposition of the territory. On that, final agreement remains the responsibility of the United Nations, and it should be discharged after these interim arrangements have been completed.

I venture to submit these proposals to the Assembly because I believe they will provide a basis not only for the essential and prior withdrawal of Israel forces, but for a better and more peaceful state of affairs than that which has existed previously. They may not constitute a perfect programme, and I realize that they will not fully meet the wishes of the two parties to this conflict. This programme is, admittedly, a compromise as any resolution based on it would be a compromise, but it is meant to be a constructive compromise which may lead to further steps that will make for lasting peace. In that spirit it is submitted to the Assembly.

The Canadian suggestions immediately came under strong criticism from the representatives of the U.S.S.R., Syria, and Iraq. While the debate continued sporadically, consisting for the most part of speeches by delegations which supported the six-power resolution, diplomatic discussions were going on in Washington between representatives of the United States, France, and Israel. Following these discussions the Government of Israel decided to withdraw its military and civil personnel from the Gaza strip and its troops from the Sharm al-Shaikh area.

The Israel Foreign Minister, Mrs. Meir, announced to the Assembly on March 1 her government's intention to withdraw, explaining at the same time the "assumptions" on which this action was being taken. She said:

The Government of Israel is now in a position to announce its plans for full and prompt withdrawal from the Sharm al-Shaikh area and the Gaza strip, in compliance with resolution I of 2 February 1957.

We have repeatedly stated that Israel has no interest in the strip of land overlooking the western coast of the Gulf of Aqaba. Our sole purpose has been to ensure that, on the withdrawal of Israel forces, continued freedom of navigation will exist