

and from what seems at times to be a morbid preoccupation and suspicion of the people in that area, a suspicion they have of the people who once ruled them; it comes also from the impatience of these people in the Middle East to convert political freedom into economic and social progress and more fundamentally it comes from the pressure especially in Egypt of a rapidly growing population on the productive resources of the country which cannot keep pace with that increased population.

There is also, and we are now getting closer to the immediate difficulties, the bitter and at times seemingly insoluble problem of the relations between Israel and her Arab neighbours which came to a head in the explosion of last October.

Since that time the United Nations has brought about a cease-fire and has established an agency for securing and supervising that cease-fire. How that was done was discussed in the House last November. Since that time the United Nations has been considering the withdrawal of Israel from Egypt. There has been agreement from the beginning in New York with this withdrawal in principle; but it has been difficult to convert that agreement in principle into one of practice, whether the agreement should be unconditional or whether it should be conditional.

The House will remember that after the withdrawal of United Kingdom and French forces from Port Said last December the forces of Israel also withdrew from all Egypt or Egyptian administered territories except the points Sharm al-Shaikh on the Straits of Tiran and the Gaza strip. Israel for some time was unable to withdraw her forces from those two places without assurances, first, about navigation in the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba and, second, that Gaza was not to be returned to a situation where it could be used as it had been used previously as a base for attack on Israel.

Egypt and the other Arab and a great many Asian states refused to consider at the Assembly any arrangement on these matters, or even at times to discuss them, until a complete withdrawal of Israeli forces had been effected. They refused to agree that the United Nations Emergency Force could be used in any sense as an occupation force. In particular India and Yugoslavia, which were supplying strong and effective contingents to this force, held strong views on that point - and their views are important. The Arab-Asian group also refused to accept at the United Nations Assembly any change in the armistice arrangements of some years ago between Egypt and Israel concerning the Gaza strip while permitting Israel to benefit from other provisions of those armistice arrangements. As for the Gulf of Aqaba and the Straits of Tiran the Arab-Asian group, or most of them, felt that freedom of navigation there would depend on the legal status of the Gulf and the Straits, the waters of which some of them considered to be not international but territorial.