

follow up discussions initiated by the Secretary-General with the Laotian Government. In mid-December Mr. Tuomioja in a report to the Secretary-General proposed co-ordinated action by the United Nations and Specialized Agencies to assist Laos in such basic sections of its economy as natural resources, transport and communications. He also suggested a series of short-term projects. As a result of this preliminary study the Secretary-General requested the Commissioner for Technical Assistance, Mr. Roberto M. Heurtematte, to discuss with Laotian authorities various technical and organizational questions relating to such a programme.

The Middle East

Arab-Israeli Relations, UNTSO and UNEF

Although in 1958 the main effort of the United Nations in the Middle East had been concentrated, perforce, on inter-Arab problems, the principal focus of United Nations activity in the area in 1959 was once again the Palestine problem, as during most of the past decade. The chief exception to this pattern was the work of the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Amman, which continued during 1959 in its important task of facilitating inter-Arab relations in accord with the Assembly resolution of August 21, 1958. The Secretary-General has indicated that "a further improvement in relations between Arab countries, which is warmly to be hoped for, would call for a reconsideration of the arrangements regarding the Special Representative in Amman."

No progress was made during the year towards a final settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute, but there was evidence of increased understanding, in various quarters of the United Nations, of the basic factors involved in a key element in this dispute, the refugee issue, as a result of a report by the Secretary-General on the matter (see section on "Assistance for Palestine Arab Refugees" in Chapter III, page 29). Another aspect of the general Palestine problem which received attention in a United Nations context during the year was the question of the United Arab Republic's refusal to permit the transit of Israeli ships and cargoes through the Suez Canal in accord with the 1951 Security Council resolution, unless all other United Nations resolutions on the Palestine issue, notably those concerning the refugees, were also implemented. Mr. Hammarskjöld indicated in the introduction to his Annual Report that while the United Nations must never lose sight of its repeatedly stated ultimate objectives in the Suez transit issue, it might make its main contribution at present by continuing to work for a reduction of tensions, for the avoidance of incidents and for such solutions to limited problems as might be attainable and which might lead to further opportunities for progress. Canada, which has made clear its stand on the necessity of according free transit to all countries in the Suez Canal, has done what it can to assist the Secretary-General in his efforts regarding this problem.

On the borders between Israel and the Arab states, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) and the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF), in both of which Canada participates, continued their task of attempting to prevent border incidents and reduce tension.* The most disturbed sector was, as in 1958, the frontier between Israel and the Syrian Region of the United Arab Republic, and nearly half of the UNTSO's 103 officers were concentrated here. On January 30 the Security Council met to

*An account of the UNTSO's origin and functioning may be found in *External Affairs*, June 1959 (pp. 131-135).