

Mr. Speaker, in somewhat more detail in elaborating the proposals we made at the Assembly. It will, I think, if I can go into it in detail, remove some of the misconceptions about this particular problem.

#### The Problem of Gaza

Legally, as I have stated, responsibility for the civil administration of Gaza, under the Egyptian-Israeli Armistice Agreement of 1949, lies with Egypt. However, in planning for the restoration of civil administration following the withdrawal of Israel forces from the area, we stated our views to the General Assembly at that time -- this view was shared by a great many other delegations and indeed I think by the Secretary-General himself -- that there were important practical considerations which qualified or should qualify this legal position. We have an extremely explosive situation in a small and crowded area where there are about 300,000 people, and perhaps 260,000 of them are refugees. It should be recognized, we thought, that this situation might very easily get out of control, and accordingly we considered -- this was also the feeling of other members of the Assembly -- that the United Nations should accept, and Egypt should agree to the acceptance of, responsibility to the maximum possible extent for establishing and maintaining effective civil administration of the Gaza strip. This arrangement, of course, would have to be without prejudice to the legal rights of Egypt in the territory under the armistice agreement, and would be provisional, pending final agreement on the proper disposition of Gaza which has never, since the creation of the State of Israel, belonged to the sovereign territory of any state.

The words we used in the Assembly in putting forward this programme are on the record, Mr. Speaker. Perhaps I could quote one paragraph from our statement. On February 26 I said at the Assembly:

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 effective civil administration in the territory; in fostering economic development and social welfare, in maintaining law and order. The United Nations Relief and Works Administration is already there, with an experienced and efficient administrative nucleus. The United Nations could also provide other help through United Nations technical assistance machinery, the resources of its secretariat, and expert consultants recruited for special purposes. In this way there would be built up in Gaza, in co-operation with Egypt and with Israel, a United Nations civil administration.

We had a resolution drafted which would have put that programme before the Assembly but we did not attempt to bring it forward because, as I have indicated, there was a feeling on