

Israeli troops, on their withdrawal from the Sharm al-Shaikh area, should, as the Secretary-General puts it in his report of 24 January, "be followed by UNEF in the same way as in other parts of Sinai", in order to assist in maintaining quiet in that area and in preventing conflict. Surely this would be in accordance with the purposes already laid down by this Assembly for that Force.

Fourthly, there is the problem of the Gaza strip. This is perhaps the most complicated and difficult of the arrangements to be decided, as it has political, social, economic, and humanitarian aspects. We are dealing here with 300,000 people, not merely with territory. I should like, therefore, to go into this particular aspect of the problem in somewhat more detail.

The Gaza strip was a part, as you know, of the mandated territory of Palestine. It is not Egyptian territory. Its indigenous population of 60,000 to 70,000 is Palestinian Arab, and is now greatly augmented by some 267,000 refugees, practically all of whom are Palestinian Arabs. It was occupied by Egypt immediately after the termination of the British Mandate in May 1948. And that occupation pending final settlement of the area was acknowledged in the Egyptian-Israeli Armistice Agreement of 1949.

Egypt has not annexed this strip and claims to have no intention of doing so. The territory had never been occupied by Israel prior to 29 October 1956, and since then Israel has also disavowed any intention of annexing the strip, though measures and plans for economic development of the area, taken or projected, may indicate an intention to open the territory to Israeli settlement. Should this happen, and in view of recent developments it may well not happen, but should this happen—Israeli settlement—it would probably mean that most of the indigenous Arab inhabitants of the strip would be forced into dependence or destitution as the territory cannot support now even the small normal Arab population.

Surely there would be little logic to an arrangement whereby Israel would assume responsibility for the administration of a territory not belonging to it, and where it remained in opposition to a decision of the United Nations Assembly and against the wishes of the Arab inhabitants, for most of whom, as refugees, Israel in these new circumstances might also have to accept responsibility or some great measure of responsibility.

In the discharge of its responsibilities for refugees, the United Nations has not recently enjoyed satisfactory relations with the administration of this territory. That situation would be even more difficult, perhaps impossible, if Israel remained in control in the conditions I have just mentioned. The effect of a controversy of this kind would be disastrous for the Arab refugees in Gaza and serious for the Arab refugee problem as a whole. Nor could the United Nations, in my view, take on any new role for maintaining security in and against the Gaza strip if Israel insisted on remaining there in spite of the Armistice Agreement and of repeated United Nations Assembly resolutions that she should withdraw.

Yet the key issue in this area from the Israeli standpoint is security, we are told, against any resumption of incursions or raids into Israel from Gaza territory.

From the United Nations standpoint, a key issue also is how to provide security on both sides after Israel withdraws, on the basis of the Assembly's resolution of 2 November 1956, of later resolutions, as well as of the reports of the Secretary-General.

Continued occupation of the Gaza strip by Israel armed forces or by Israel police and civilian administration after the withdrawal of her troops, and in the face of bitter Egyptian hostility, cannot, in my view, give the security sought, for the following reasons:

First, the prolongation of Israeli occupation of non-Israeli territory in the face of our decisions to the contrary, and in violation of the Armistice Agreement will only incite new provocations, perhaps of greater magnitude than any hitherto. The emotions aroused would be almost certain to increase the likelihood of a resumption of incursions and raids from outside the strip, even though the protection afforded against them might well be increased inside the strip.

Secondly, Israeli occupation of Gaza would only shift a little to the southwest the line between Israel and Egypt across which the raids might come. Since there will always be a line or frontier between Egypt and Israel, the only sure way to stop the raids across the Egyptian-Israeli line, wherever it may be, is by political action based