

- (c) Generally to maintain peaceful conditions along both sides of the line.

Third, Gulf of Aqaba and Straits of Tiran.

It should be agreed and affirmed that there should be no interference with innocent passage through or any assertion of belligerent rights in the Straits of Tiran. Israeli troops, on their withdrawal from the Sharm el Shaikh area, should, as the Secretary-General puts it in his report of January 24, "be followed by UNEF in the same way as in other parts of Sinai", in order to assist in maintaining quiet in the area and in preventing conflict. This would be in accordance with the purposes already laid down by this Assembly for the force.

Fourth, 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 three hundred thousand people, not merely with territory.

I should like, therefore, to go into this problem in somewhat more detail.

The Gaza strip was a part of the mandate 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, also Palestinian Arabs. It was occupied by Egypt immediately after the termination of the British mandate in May, 1948. This occupation pending final settlement was acknowledged in the Egyptian-Israeli Armistice Agreement of 1949. Egypt has not annexed the strip and claims to have no intention of doing so. The territory had never been occupied by Israel prior to the 29 October, 1956 invasion, 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, however, the result would probably be that most of the indigenous Arab inhabitants of the strip would eventually be forced into dependence or destitution as the territory cannot support 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 U N 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. In the discharge of its responsibilities for refugees, the U N 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