

PROPOSALS FOR MIDDLE EAST SETTLEMENT

(Continued from P. 2)

"I have just spoken about the deployment of UNEF along the demarcation line. In the Gaza strip, this deployment would serve not only as an effective interposition of UNEF between the armed forces of Egypt and Israel, but as a screen against incursions, raids and retaliatory attacks across the line from either side. Furthermore, in a transitional period, UNEF and other appropriate agencies of the UN would be given functions within the Gaza strip which would contribute towards safeguarding life and property, would guarantee good civilian administration, would assure the maximum assistance to the Palestine refugees there, and would protect and foster the economic development of the Gaza strip and its people. In this regard we have heard with great interest the expression of confidence by the Secretary-General on the attitude of the Government of Egypt towards the necessary arrangements in the Gaza strip with regard to the withdrawal of Israel. Such a statement by the Secretary-General is not to be taken lightly.

"The military aspect of withdrawal is relatively uncomplicated. Immediately the Israeli forces leave, the UNEF should enter. As the Armistice Agreement limits Egyptian forces to 'defensive' elements only, and as the UNEF will already be deployed along the armistice line, and as the strip is so narrow, the Government of Egypt should not envisage the return of her armed forces to this area after the Israeli troops have withdrawn.

"So far as the civil administration of the territory is concerned, the position is more difficult and more complicated.

"Legally under the Armistice Agreement, the civil administration is to be Egyptian and not Israeli. But there are important practical considerations which qualify this legal position and which cannot be ignored in the replacement of the present administration.

"It is perfectly clear that we should not simply command the Israeli civil administration to depart in a night. Any one who believes that this is possible should study carefully the special report of the Director of UNRWA on the Agency's operations in the Gaza strip and ponder upon the situation which exists in that area. We have here an extremely explosive situation which could very easily get out of control. In this tiny area are crowded over two hundred thousand refugees and a much smaller native population. They are bitter and frustrated, administered by strangers; rebellious, riven by frictions, and in a mood, I have no doubt, to erupt in violence and bloodshed once firm control is removed.

"There has already been more than enough murder in the Gaza strip, and the UN cannot be indirectly responsible for more. We owe protection to the refugees and we certainly owe protection to the servants of the UN Relief

And Works Agency who have been carrying on so heroically in the face of such obstacles, difficulties, and dangers in the Gaza strip.

NEGOTIATED TRANSITION

"Provision, therefore, must be made for a peaceful transition from the administration of Israel to something no less strong and effective and at the same time more generally acceptable. Such a transition can be effected only by negotiation, and such negotiation, which should be both speedy and thorough, can only be conducted by direct agents of the UN. There is no sense in pretending that, under present circumstances, it could be undertaken between Egyptians and Israelis alone. The good offices of a third party must be interposed, and this can only be the UN.

"This is all the more desirable because after Israel's withdrawal, the UN 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. UNRWA is already there, with an experienced and efficient administrative nucleus. The UN could also provide other help through the UN technical assistance machinery, the resources of its Secretariat, and expert consultants recruited for specific purposes. In this way there would be built up in Gaza, in co-operation with Egypt and with Israel, a UN civil administration.

"To co-ordinate and make effective arrangements to this end the Secretary-General might decide to appoint a UN Commissioner for Gaza. Working with the Commander of UNEF and the Director of UNRWA, and after consultation with Egyptian and Israeli representatives as well as with refugee and other local Arab leaders, he could arrange to bring about with all possible speed the replacement of the present Israeli civil administration of the area.

"In this way, and perhaps in this way only, we should be able to effect the withdrawal of Israel, with order and speed, and in such a manner as to protect the interests of the inhabitants, and of both Egypt and Israel as well.

"After the replacement had been completed, this UN Commissioner should, in my view, remain in Gaza where he would have chief responsibility for all UN activities there, including those of UNEF inside the strip. He would be concerned with the supervision of the Armistice Agreement, including maintenance of the cease-fire observers' functions, checking and reporting on alleged incidents of violation. In discharging these responsibilities he would work through UNEF rather than UNTSO. Though this would be without prejudice, of course, to the role of UNTSO in the other three Armistice Agreements.