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Middle East

Meeting of Advisory Committee on UNEF

7 March 57

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CONFIDENTIAL

MEETING OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON UNEF

(Meeting held in the Secretary-General's Conference Room on
Thursday, 7 March 1957 at 12 noon)

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Gentlemen, I would suggest that, first of all, General Martola should give you briefly a picture of where we stand on the withdrawal.

General MARTOLA: Our troops have now entered the Gaza Strip. The Gaza Strip is about 40 kilometres long and from 5 to 12 kilometres wide. There are two main towns, Gaza in the northern part and Rafah in the south. Our troops have entered in the strength of about 2,400 men. General Burns himself, with an advance part of his headquarters, is in Gaza, and also the Danish-Norwegian battalion has taken quarters there. The Danish and Norwegians are in the strength of about 700 men. Then in two small villages in the south of Gaza there are the Indians with a strength of 900 men; a little south of them there are the Colombians with 500 men. The Swedish battalion is in Rafah in the southern part of the Gaza Strip. The Swedish number about 300, so that the total strength is about 2,400. I presume that they have patrols not only in the towns and streets, but also around the Armistice Line. General Burns and his staff have taken over also the civilian administration from Israel.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Thank you. As to Sharm el-Sheikh, you know that tomorrow morning the evacuation will be completed there. The take-over will be by the Finnish contingent. That is to say, we can now note, when we approach the General Assembly tomorrow, that we will have a report on the completion of withdrawal in accordance with resolution I of 2 February. We can then, of course, under all the circumstances, as I indicated on the last occasion, turn all our attention to resolution II.

Before coming to that and before coming to the question generally of the report and of what may be done by the General Assembly, I should like for a second to revert to the question as we discussed it the last time. I then had in mind the possibility of a report which would at least by implication reflect the results of the kind of thinking on legal issues which we embarked on Tuesday.

Under those circumstances I had hoped to have a draft before you. However, the continued discussions and the continued clarification of all of these legal problems have led me to the conviction that it is wiser to postpone consideration of them although it will lead to unavoidable difficulties because of underlying ambiguities. The thinking which dictates this conclusion runs along the following lines. There are, as we noted last time, at least four different legal ideas behind United Nations functioning in Gaza. Partly, those ideas are held with very great conviction at present. It would definitely be dangerous in a situation which is so fraught with tensions and complications as the present one to go far in the clarification. I had never had that in mind, as you know. I had in mind primarily that we might get the clarification around this table, with reflection or no reflection in the report. However, if we look at the immediate issue, we can note that there is an agreement which will render it possible to go ahead with the future. The agreement is that the initial "take-over" -- and I mention those words in quotation marks -- would be exclusively by United Nations or United Nations auxiliary bodies. That has not been disputed by the Egyptians. It has been announced formally to the General Assembly and it does not run counter to whatever theories may be held on the Israel side. The initial "take-over" may of course be given two entirely different interpretations, initial meaning a very short period, just the switch, or initial characterizing the stage in the development generally. If it had to be interpreted in the first sense as only the immediate situation at the "take-over", we could of course not avoid going into those issues which I raised last time, and of which we are all aware, because then they would face us in a very brutal form, as I indicated last time, very soon indeed.

However, with the other interpretation, that the initial "take-over" is an initial stage without any time significance, then we are in a different situation. Then we will have, so to say, a kind of legal moratorium during the period when the United Nations has to function simply because that is the natural transitional arrangement. For that theory or for that pattern to be applicable, that interpretation to be given, it is of course necessary to count on the goodwill of the Egyptian Government in accepting the interpretation. I feel entitled to say that such goodwill does exist and that, therefore, the term "initial" can be given the second interpretation -- that is to say, an

interpretation that it represents the first stage, the question of what follows left open, with no special understanding as to the extent of this first stage. I want to add, however, that obviously the first stage is only a first stage; it has a time-limit. It is in no way indefinite, so we cannot believe that we can just turn our backs on the other problems. But we may feel that we can leave them aside until the time comes when perhaps thinking has developed and feelings at least have cooled down to such an extent that what today would create drama and conflict may be discussed or done in an atmosphere where it can be accepted in a new way.

However, even if we take this second line, the initial stage being just a first stage, without any idea about the time extent, although with an understanding that it is not indefinite, we run into some immediate problems. The practical problems which arise can be illustrated simply by a reference to the questions of currency and legislation. The currency arrangement necessarily presupposes some kind of legal sovereignty somewhere in the background as the very guarantee for the circulation of currency. The UNEF, however, has all the time, for obvious reasons, been working on the basis of Egyptian pounds. The UNEF administration in Gaza for that reason should of course continue to do it; that is to say, as a question de facto when the UNEF has taken over, Egyptian currency will have to be the legal tender. We need not perhaps go into the underlying problem which represents the legal aspects. I think that not only Mr. Urrutia, but even banking lawyers, would look at it with some concern. But there again, we will just have to take the risk and a chance. I only indicated such an arrangement as an example. However, such an arrangement will necessarily involve the United Nations in certain economic risks because it does mean that in certain respects we will be back of currency circulation and we will have to take the consequences of such a currency circulation. However, I think it is better to take that risk than to make any attempt to reach agreement with the Israelis or others concerning the matter. Whatever the cost may be, it can never be excessive. It is, I think, a good investment in view of the desirability of avoiding the raising of the whole legal issue for the present.

The matter is being studied with the assistance of an expert from the International Fund because it has to be, so to say, explored in some detail and regulations will have to be issued in some form, but we can leave that aside here. It is now handled on a purely technical level, with the background I indicated: that the very fact that the UNEF has worked on the basis of Egyptian currency, as it is stationed in Egypt, leads automatically to the conclusion, irrespective of all legal considerations, that Egyptian currency is the natural legal tender for the UNEF forces in Gaza.

The second question is the question of jurisdiction where, as you will realize, the question of sovereign rights of the Government immediately comes into play. In that case and in the present situation, if we accept the initial "take-over", as I tried to explain it, I think that our only way to proceed is to work with the existing system. We cannot reform it. We cannot introduce any new elements. The constitutional background must of course be somehow a combination of our presence with administrative functions in the initial "take-over" period with the consent of Egypt to this initial "take-over". Again we skate on very thin ice, but I think that it is ice which may bring us close to the other shore, and that is all we have to play for.

Of an entirely different order are the complications which do arise, so to say, in this House. Our friends the journalists have again and again been worried regarding the question of whether or not the Secretary-General considered himself as having the authority to use the UNEF for civil administration. The question did not arise in Port Said where in fact we had it for a short while. In the same way one can say that to the extent -- and that is the presentation I would like to give to it -- civil administration tasks derive from the main functioning of the UNEF, transition-wise, the decisions of the General Assembly on the main functions are a justification for the transitional exercise also of civil administration responsibilities in Gaza. It is very thin ice -- again I can point it out here -- but the alternative would be to ask the General Assembly for a formal decision that the UNEF would be entitled to exert such civil administration functions, and you are well aware that it is impossible to ask the General Assembly for such a decision without raising the whole problem which, with the present approach, I would like to avoid raising for the present. That is to

say, I must trust that the General Assembly will kindly, I would not say close its eyes because it should know very well what it is doing, but tacitly accept the fact that transition-wise, during the period of the initial "take-over", the UNEF, together with UNRWA, which has very major responsibilities, as you know, functions also in the civilian field on the basis of the view that such civilian functions are unavoidably derived from its major functions as determined by the General Assembly. Those functions, as you remember, were primarily to supervise the cease-fire and withdrawal, with the time extent such a supervision has. What forms it must take in order to be effective is one of those things which have never been discussed and which I would not like to discuss now, on the tacit assumption that it is recognized that during the initial "take-over" these basic functions may have very far-reaching practical consequences.

This, I think, gives you in a very quick and brief outline the reasons why I have no intention of bringing out even implicitly the questions which were raised the last time and how I feel that it can be avoided on a few points of symptomatic interest both in relation to the General Assembly and in relation to the parties. I think these examples amply clarify how basic and how important are the questions which were raised last time and how far we must go in order to be able to avoid raising them. But I trust that you fully appreciate my reasons for not raising them and my reasons for making these somewhat bold legal constructions in order to gain time and in the hope that time in this case will provide us with new possibilities to bridge the gulfs which undoubtedly do exist among Members of the United Nations.

On the basic legal issue which was raised last time, I would say only this: that short of objections from the General Assembly, short of a new development of the theory from my side to the General Assembly with its acceptance, of course the United Nations record must guide the Secretariat and myself. The statement on the legal situation in Gaza in the report of 24 January was perfectly clear and in no way contradicted in the General Assembly. That same statement was the obviously implied basis in the Addendum to the report which I gave orally on 22 February, and it was amplified and clarified without any deviation from the basic construction in the report to the General Assembly of 26 February. I repeat, that short of any decision to the contrary or any opposition to the line consistently held in the presentations of the Secretariat, I must of course consider

those lines as the basis for our action without, however, bringing them out as issues for debate at the present moment. That, I think, takes care of the point on which you would like to have some clarity. You may say, "Well, it is all right that for political reasons, not reasons of expediency but solid political reasons, so to say, you shelve for the time being the further study or clarification or agreement on the basic legal issues. But even when you try and work out compromise formulas in order to get on and get around the corner, you must after all have some guiding idea." My reply to that question is the one I gave. From the Secretariat point of view there can be only one guidance of that character, and that is what we have consistently presented to the General Assembly without any rejection by the General Assembly. That does not mean that I want to vindicate a certain theory in relation to anybody, but it does mean that this must remain the guiding approach in the partial solutions which we must work out to all sorts of problems of detail.

I should further like to inform the Committee that, in order to run the operation from here as well as we can during this initial period, we have a Secretariat committee at work which will take care of all problems as they arise. If they are purely administrative, we will not burden you with them. If they do give rise to questions which are of interest to the General Assembly, it is a matter of course that you will be brought into the picture. It is also a matter of course that all developments of any significance concerning the deployment and the functions will be brought to the notice of this Advisory Committee at once.

I should like to add finally one word on what is happening in the region. You see that there are contacts today, for example, with the Israel side. As a matter of course there are quite a few household problems which simply must be discussed in a somewhat frivolous way such as, "Where is the key to the door?" and so on. Those questions obviously should not and do not give rise to any worries on the question of principle.

I think that is what I need to say by way of introduction and to the extent that it seems to you perhaps to reflect crystallized stands, do not understand them in that way because in my view they are not; they are of course open to challenge from any member of this Committee and to amendments in the light of the discussion. I presented it in the form of conclusions only because I

felt that this was the most productive way in which I could approach this meeting.

The report as such is another issue, and I should perhaps say a word about that. The report as such, as I now see it, would consist of three short parts. The first part would be simply a factual report on the completion of withdrawal, including of course what positions are held by the UNEF. The second part would give its attention to resolution II of 2 February, indicating that as resolution I has been complied with it is now time for implementation of resolution II with its anchorage in the report of 24 January and with its clear indication of further deployment of UNEF on the Armistice Lines, with those two accents brought into focus strictly in keeping with the very wording of the resolution itself. The third part would be in very brief outline to indicate those points on which I have presumed a kind of tacit acceptance from the General Assembly without asking it the question.

In my own working paper here, which is the basis for the work of the Secretariat Committee, I have spelled it out in the following way:

1. Wider functions for UNRWA in assistance to the United Nations.
2. Functions for the UNEF in the civilian field, derived from its normal functions as these during the initial "take-over" period necessarily extend beyond purely military functions.

How that should be worded is a question which I would not like to go into now. What I mean is just simply the acceptance by the General Assembly tacitly of the fact that the UNEF, on the basis of its functions as determined by the General Assembly, will have during the initial "take-over" a factual functioning which extends beyond what a military unit normally has. That should be obvious to everybody, but it must be understood. It is the least controversial and least provocative way in which I can register the fact that in spite of the absence of any decision to this effect from the General Assembly, a civilian administration is established during the initial "take-over".

3. The fact that there will be wider costs for the Secretariat, including perhaps some compensation to UNRWA, which will have costs outside its terms of reference.

4. A modified role for the Truce Supervision Organization, which derives from the very fact that in Gaza of course those functions which normally are functions of UNTSO in practice will be covered by the UNEF.

Constitutionally the problem is not very great. The Commander of the UNEF is also still Chief of Staff of UNTSO. It means in fact that in order to maintain the status of UNTSO under the Armistice Agreements, all that is needed is that in a territory under UNEF control the Commander of UNEF takes back his UNTSO functions. So we skip over that piece of thin ice too without any new decisions and quite easily, and without going against the Armistice Agreements.

As regards these four points in what I call the third part of the report, there is none which, if properly worded, needs give rise to any discussion in the General Assembly, but I think that you must give me this much of a protection for the Secretariat that the General Assembly knows that we are going beyond our formal competence. That is the full story.

Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia): I think it is a very good approach and the only one we can have now. Would it be the idea to have the General Assembly meet tomorrow morning?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: In the afternoon.

Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia): Tomorrow afternoon, and after that nothing at all?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Nothing at all.

Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia): No recess?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: And no resolution.

Mr. CORDIER: No resolution on this matter.

Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia): I think there ought not to be any resolution on any kind of recess. Any kind of wording would be bad. It might be very difficult because if the Arab countries see that the Assembly is going to close, they might insist that we clarify the matter a little more. My feeling is that probably nothing will happen. We shall just adjourn tomorrow, and probably the next meeting can be held in two weeks from now, without anything being said.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: That is in the hands of the General Assembly. I doubt whether you can manoeuvre that way. Mr. Cordier's clarification -- no resolution on this matter -- with emphasis on "this", is realistic because there will certainly be some need for clarification of the form in which the Assembly suddenly stops its discussions. My feeling is that the form should be such as to meet the theory which you have in mind; that is to say, people would feel that all the loose ends can, without any noise, any drama, any red tape, be taken up and tied together as they should be by the Assembly, on very short notice and effectively. That is to say, I guess that what would correspond to this situation is the recognition of the fact that one phase of the Assembly's work has come to an end; but that, on the other hand, this situation may require a twenty-four hours' notice-meeting of the Assembly to take care of it, without anybody regarding that as something dramatic or out of order.

Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia): Are you thinking of any formula? It would be a good thing to have one ready.

Mr. MIR KHAN (Pakistan): If that is possible, I think it would be ideal, but I have heard from other delegations some talk of a resolution on this.

Mr. CORDIER: I think, as the Secretary-General has indicated, one phase of the Assembly would be regarded as being over tomorrow night; but, on the other hand, considering the nature of the situation, the Assembly, as the principal organ, ought to be available, and availability would mean, on the one hand, that the Assembly would not jump into the picture either too soon or too late. In other words, there should be a formula that would balance the availability of the Assembly in such form as to be effective in whatever situation developed. That being the case, it would appear that perhaps a reasonable formula would be that the President, in consultation with the Members represented in the General Committee, would, perhaps on the request of the Secretary-General or requests from Members -- depending on the nature of the situation -- then issue a call for the Assembly to meet within the next two or three days. In other words, the formula ought to be a balanced one which would make possible what, I think, everybody wants, namely, that the General Assembly should stand by and be available neither too soon nor too late. This formula would seem to provide opportunity for that kind of consultation and availability.

Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia): Who is working on the formula?

Mr. CORDIER: I think a draft resolution will be tabled, sponsored by a number of delegations -- including your own, perhaps.

Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia): Do you know the text which we are supposed to present?

Mr. CORDIER: This draft resolution is a very simple one:

"The General Assembly, recalling its resolution A/RES.464 of 15 February 1957 concerning the progress of work of the eleventh session and the closing date of the session, having completed consideration of all the items on its agenda with the exception of items 66 and 67, decides, in accordance with rule 6 of the rules of procedure, to adjourn its eleventh session temporarily and to authorize the President of the Assembly, in consultation with the Secretary-General and with the Members represented on the General Committee during the session, to reconvene the General Assembly in plenary meeting as necessary in order to consider further items 66 and 67."

Mr. MIR KHAN (Pakistan): Do you expect any trouble? I have heard some ...

Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia): I think the word "adjourn" would be very bad. Could you put "decides not to meet again until" -- or something like that? People might be afraid of the words "adjourn" or "recess". The idea is that the General Assembly must theoretically...

Mr. LALL (India): Why not put it positively and say "decides to meet again"?

Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia): "Decides to meet again when the Secretary-General..."

Mr. CORDIER: One could use the word "suspend".

Mr. LALL (India): You said "having completed consideration of all the items on its agenda with the exception of items 66 and 67". If you say that and then that we shall decide to meet again to consider these two items...

Mr. MIR KHAN (Pakistan): I would suggest that if the emphasis was on the negative side it might be better so that instead of saying "not to meet again", we could say "to meet only when".

Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia): I agree with you.

Mr. MIR KHAN (Pakistan): The emphasis should be on the negative side rather than using the word "recess" or "will meet again".

Mr. LALL (India): Mr. Mir Khan calls that the negative side; I would call it the positive side.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I should have said "having completed consideration of such and such items and decides to meet when".

Mr. CORDIER: "Decides, in accordance with rule 6 of the rules of procedure to meet when the President of the General Assembly, in consultation with the Secretary-General and the Members represented on the General Committee, to reconvene the Assembly in plenary meetings in order to consider items 66 and 67".

Mr. FREITAS-VALLE (Brazil): Could we say "when the President, in consultation, so decides"?

Mr. CORDIER: We can cut out "reconvene".

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Having solved that problem, we can solve mine now. I have given you a tentative solution; it is for you to decide whether it is wise.

Mr. URRUTIA (Colombia): I think it is excellent. This solution linked with a resolution like that, is all right. But if we say "recess", people will be afraid because that gives the idea that we are going on, while probably nothing will happen and we shall not meet. There is no need to discuss your report because of this resolution.

Mr. LALL (India): This is not meant to be a discordant note, but may I say I am very glad to learn that the report you are going to present to the General Assembly is such a brief one. I think that in itself is very helpful and I think the idea that it should not and need not be followed by a resolution is entirely correct and entirely in keeping with the situation which faces you and the Assembly. I still incline to the view that the report could be, if anything, a little briefer than you suggest. I still think that the sequence of the report might be that, Israel having withdrawn in compliance with the first of the two resolutions of 2 February, the Secretary-General will now address himself to the implementation of the second resolution. Now, it is stated in that resolution that implementation is to be in consultation with the two parties, and the results which you want to achieve and which you are putting in the third part of your report, I would suggest are untimely in this report because the extent to which you will be able to arrive at those positions must depend on your consultations, and I think, technically, much as I think it desirable that you should have this covered by you -- I mean the Secretariat in its actions in Gaza -- that the placing of that part in this report is technically untimely and it is a foreshadowing of your consultations. It is undoubtedly your intention to follow this arrangement up with consultations, and that being so, I would have thought that the third part of your report should just be that it is your intention to report on the implementation of the second resolution as appropriate. That would give you the cover which you require, in my view.

That may sound to you rather an exiguous, sandy cover -- of course, the area is sandy, but that is incidental. But the fact is that you had no precedent for the action which you took in Port Said; nevertheless, UNEF, for a very brief period, was faced with an accomplished administration in Port Said. Now, we cannot equate these two cases -- in Port Said and Gaza -- but in practice the fact remains that you had no precedent and you did a certain job. Now you are faced with a certain job in which you do have a slight precedent, but you might have to expand it, although I am not prejudging that issue. Besides which, I would add in that connexion that there is the fact that UNRWA has responsibilities in this particular area which it must again take over, and perhaps expand as necessary. Perhaps it was not acting fully enough before. That is a separate issue.

Having said that, may I mention the express danger that I have in view with regard to the third part of your report. It is this, that the argument can be made -- which you are, I believe, planning to make -- that administrative duties might devolve on UNEF in the accomplishment of its primary functions. At the same time, we cannot and must not overlook the fact that all through the basic legal documents regarding UNEF it has been stated that the sovereignty of Egypt must remain intact. That being so, in my view, there need be no apology for the use of Egyptian territory in this area or for the maintenance of such administrative arrangements as they had installed in this area when they were rightfully in occupation of the region in terms of the Armistice Agreement. It seems to me then that if an argument is going to be brought into the picture by your report which would tend to contradict the over-all supremacy of Egyptian sovereignty, you might raise a very, very bitter and difficult discussion in the Assembly. And I think that discussion would be beside the point, for some of the reasons which have been given and which I would summarize by saying that you have a precedent in Port Said, of a very certain kind, which you will apply to the different circumstances of Gaza, taking into account the situation in Gaza; and secondly, you are sending into Gaza the UNEF in an intensified form. You are sending in as many men as you can to a relatively small area. It is my view that this group of men can proceed quickly to the armistice line and form an effective cordon, supplementing their own bodies by such mechanical devices as barbed wire, or whatever these things are, any device which would be necessary and would be made available immediately. Then if you seal off Gaza completely from the activities of the fedayeen and the Stern gang, then what goes on behind the line in Gaza is no one's concern as far as the other side of the Armistice line goes, and the sooner that position is achieved the better.

Then the question is of applying the Armistice Agreement in consultation with the party which is to be in rightful occupation of Gaza -- that is the Gaza Strip -- under the Armistice Agreement. But the basic necessity here is, quite clearly, sealing that line completely, and the sooner that is done the better. Once that line is sealed and the Israelis realize that there are going to be no more raids, and that there are in fact no more raids out of Gaza -- and they are entitled to that assurance and entitled to follow up the emotional assurance by a clear intellectual realization -- once that position is achieved, the situation

in Gaza will become much easier to handle in terms of the Armistice Agreement and in terms of what is a practical arrangement, for which consent will, I am sure, be forthcoming from the right quarters. But if the basis of approach now is going to be an argumentation that UNEF is in fact entitled to take over civilian administration, I do not feel that this is likely to work. I think it is likely to cause far too much opposition in the Assembly, and that would not be worth while at this juncture.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: It is not an argumentation, I can assure you. I said before, I remember having said it at the last meeting, that it would be so expressed as not to call for any discussion at all. That does not mean that it would not be said. I repeat my appeal to you for understanding the fact that some minimum of legal covering must after all be established. I referred at the last meeting to various statements concerning the formalism of the Secretariat. I must say that we have an admirable record of free-wheeling constitutionally. I think even in that respect some limits should be drawn as to what we continue to do, and much as I appreciate the understanding in this group -- which protects us to a certain extent -- there is after all the need for some clarity if it can be brought without wrecking anything, and I think that can be done.

I can quote -- because I think it is helpful -- what was said in the proclamation of the Commander, in agreement with us, when they took over because it presents very well the whole legal argument in a simple statement without any provocative effect:

"UNEF acting in fulfilment of its functions as determined by the General Assembly of the United Nations, with the consent of the Government of Egypt, is being deployed in this area for the purpose of obtaining quiet during and after the withdrawal of the Israeli defence forces. Until further arrangements are made, the UNEF has assumed responsibility for civil affairs in the Gaza Strip."

Mr. LALL (India): Was that drafted by you?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: It was drafted basically in the field and checked with us.

Mr. LALL (India): Perhaps you could quote it yourself.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: That is really what I wanted to bring out, that the taking over of civil administration flows, at this initial take-over, automatically out of the other functions, but the other functions remain as defined by the Assembly.

Mr. LABOUISSSE (UNRWA): Since UNRWA has been mentioned, I should like to make a comment. I am the Director of UNRWA. You suggested that we might resume or even expand the services of UNRWA. I should like to point out that it has never stopped its services.

Mr. LALL (India): I beg your pardon; I apologize.

Mr. LABOUISSSE (UNRWA): I think this is an important thing to bear in mind. This goes to the heart of what you are talking about. UNRWA was created by the General Assembly. I am responsible to the General Assembly and I take my instructions only from the General Assembly. When this trouble started in the first part of November, there was no one to give me instructions. I decided to continue. The staff working out there represents the General Assembly and it has done a very difficult job under exceedingly dangerous and difficult circumstances. I think that all of you gentlemen here who represent Members of the General Assembly should be aware of the fact that these people are representing you. They are of different nationalities. When I was talking to the Israelis about protection for staff, they said -- General Dayan said: "We will give it to you, but we cannot assure you against being blown up by land mines or being caught by snipers." These are the people you referred to when you said that they should resume their work. They have done their work all along.

I asked the General Assembly for instructions about the continuation of UNRWA's work in the Gaza Strip. All I was able to get was a paragraph that noted with approval that UNRWA was continuing its programme for the refugees. That is all. As I understand the case, you speak of expanding services to go far beyond the refugees. We have never been created to deal with anything but the refugees. I proposed a year ago to the Assembly, in a special report, taking care of the non-refugee needy in the Gaza Strip. This was turned down by the Assembly; so it is not a question of whether we should have been doing more. We were never authorized to do more. As I understand it, now it is proposed that we do more, but who is going to take care of the needy? At the present moment, tomorrow morning, who is going to feed these people whom the Egyptians and Israelis used to feed? Who is going to run the hospitals? Two out of every three people are refugees, but there are 100,000 who are not.

I do not feel that I, as Director of UNRWA, responsible to the General Assembly, can authorize this expansion without doing something beyond my authority. Besides, I am going to be bankrupt at the end of this month if I do not get more money for the whole refugee programme. However, I do not want the Assembly's explicit approval -- I just want it known that I am going to do these things. I do not want a resolution. But having asked once for instructions and not having received them, I think I am entitled, on my own behalf and on behalf of the staff working for the General Assembly, to have the Assembly know that we are doing something more. If it does not want us to do it, it should say so, but I think, with all due respect, that the servants of the General Assembly are entitled to some thought in this particular matter.

Mr. IALL (India): I am grateful that the Director of UNRWA has clarified the position fairly clearly by telling us that there had been functions throughout, and of course I should not overlook that. But, of course, what you have said just now concerns what is going to happen in the initial period of the take-over, which is something very different from your request to the General Assembly last year that you be put in indefinite charge of the needy in Gaza.

Mr. LABOUISSSE (UNRWA): The Egyptians asked us to do it.

Mr. LALL (India): The General Assembly did not give authority for this indefinite charge, but this is going to be a situation in the initial take-over, which is covered, in my view, by what the Assembly has already decided.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I think, Mr. Lall, you must grant us a little clarity. I repeat, I think it can be done so as not to provoke any discussion concerning the issue which, with the present tactics, I am so eager to avoid, as I have indicated earlier.

There is much to be added, but I do not think there is any need to add it because if you start out from assumptions given, you can easily see how we may feel some qualms about the way in which we have to operate. I feel quite sure that we can at least count on your understanding in those various things we do without authorization, although within the limits of the general philosophy as you know it.

Mr. GUNewardENE (Ceylon): The position is quite clear so far as we see it, and we heartily endorse it.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.