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Middle East

Meeting of Advisory Committee on UNEF

2 June 59

CONFIDENTIAL

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON UNEF

(Meeting held in the Secretary-General's Conference Room
on Tuesday, 2 June 1959, at 4:00 p.m.)

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I am happy that you have found it possible to reserve this time for a meeting of the Advisory Committee. The reason why we in the Secretariat felt that it would be useful to have a meeting was, in the first instance, that, in fact, we have not met since January and I think that, at regular intervals, the Committee should have an opportunity for a review of the situation. I also feel that, as we have no written reports on developments, an opportunity should be provided for you to have an oral progress report from time to time.

Finally, there are certain developments which call for, if not consideration by the Advisory Committee, some thought on its part. That is to say, it is not a situation which calls for decisions, but rather a situation which requires at least attention since we may, at a later stage, be forced to this or that kind of choice. These various circumstances have made me feel that it was about time for a meeting of the Committee.

As you know, quite recently Mr. Bunche was out in the Middle East. The newspapers have speculated a bit and thought that it was because of Suez. Suez may or may not have entered the picture -- it was not for that reason he went. The reason was that, just as we wish to keep in touch with you, we wish also to keep in touch first hand with developments in Gaza and around UNEF, and I felt that Mr. Bunche should have an opportunity to acquaint himself directly on the spot with the different problems and to straighten out whatever might need a decision from Headquarters. With this background, I would invite Mr. Bunche to say what he feels he should say on the basis of his visit to UNEF.

Mr. BUNCHE: First of all, I would say that there was an indication of how UNEF has become an institution. Since my last visit two years ago UNEF has become an institution. It is now well along in its third year of existence in that area. I spent a week with the Force, from 23 to 29 April; I visited all

seven remaining contingents -- reduced, as you know, from the original ten; I went into the camps and to the observation posts all along the Gaza Strip, the armistice demarcation line, and along the international frontier down to the tip of the peninsula at Sharm el Sheik. It might be well to remind veteran members of the Committee and the new members of the extent of that line. The perimeter of the Gaza Strip, which is the armistice demarcation line proper, is sixty kilometres. From the beginning of the international frontier at the Mediterranean down to the Gulf of Aqaba is another 213 kilometres, and from the Gulf of Aqaba down to Sharm el Sheik at the tip of the peninsula, where the Swedish units are now stationed, is another 187 kilometres, making a total of 460 kilometres for which this force is responsible. It is quite a long line. I might also say that, as of 15 May, the strength of the Force was 439 officers and 4,887 other ranks, making a total of 5,326 officers and men, reduced from approximately 6,200 at the peak of the strength of the Force.

I must say that I was tremendously impressed by the smoothness of the operation, its effectiveness, and the way the Force is functioning. At this time of the year one can drive along the armistice demarcation line -- the Gaza Strip -- and see crops growing on both sides of that three feet wide and two feet deep ploughed furrow and these crops completely obscure a good part of the line, so that the fields appear to be completely together from the Jewish and the Arab side, with farmers in the fields on both sides of the line within easy hailing distance of each other -- at some places only twenty or thirty feet apart -- farming without carrying weapons, but farming under the eyes of the UNEF men who man the observation posts which, along the Gaza Strip, are spaced about every 100 metres. And I might say that the men in these observation posts -- the usual complement is two men to a post, which is a sandbag emplacement usually on some high ground such as a sand dune -- are on duty there for six-hour stints which, I am told, in military practice is more than usually long.

The men in the support camps just behind the line provide personnel for these observation posts. They man the observation posts in the day, and at night patrol on foot along the demarcation line, and with vehicles along the international frontier. The men in the support camps just behind the line are out there on

details, ranging, according to the contingent, from thirty to forty days, which is a long time to be out on the line, so to speak, away from the base headquarter camps. They are away from entertainment, away from movies, and away also from the better meals. I could not say they are away from the exciting life of Gaza, because there isn't any, but it is a very lonely duty.

Seeing this, seeing the people in the fields each day on both sides of the line, one can only surmise what would happen - and I think it is pretty clear what would happen - if these observation posts were removed. There has certainly been no change in the basic attitude of the people towards each other. If there are no incidents and no violence, it is because of the presence of UNEF. And there has been some strain felt, as expressed to me by some of the senior officers in the contingents, through the increase in the line that has to be covered by the remaining troops since the withdrawal of the Colombian contingent. This was at the time when the added strength for the Scandinavian units was just arriving and had not yet been deployed, and it was felt that the additional Scandinavian personnel would help to remove this strain.

The morale of the men in all contingents I found to be excellent and it was expressed particularly in the pride which they showed in fixing up their quarters, in giving vent to artistic expression of the most ingenious kind. It was quite revealing to see what men under these conditions, out in the sand dunes, could do with beer cans and Pommac bottles and bottle caps in the way of decoration and artistic design, and how, even in the sand, they can make flower gardens. They have also painted murals on the walls of their quarters. I saw a good deal of the Indian pipe band, which helps the situation out there a great deal. It is not where one would normally expect to find an Indian pipe band. The Second Grenadiers are out there and they are very much in demand for providing entertainment in the different contingents.

The discipline is excellent, and I say this because, while I was there, there were one or two incidents which indicated the quality of the discipline and the self-restraint employed by the men. After all, these are soldiers trained to defend themselves. To give one example: a couple of the members of the Second Grenadiers on observation post duty saw one day a rather large number of Arab women cross the line over to the Israeli side and begin to harvest grass on the Israeli side. This, of course, could lead to trouble because the Israelis would be sure to come and chase them back. In accordance with their duty, the two men

first called their headquarters and informed them what was happening, and then went down and coralled these women and shooed them back across the line and took into custody two or three who were found to be the leaders, to hold for the local authorities. In the meantime villagers congregated and became a little emotional. They did not want the women to be turned over to the local authorities because they felt that they would be arrested. And the excitement grew. There were one or two men present with weapons -- Sten guns -- so there was a possibility of real trouble. The two UNEF men -- actually there were four of them finally -- were pushed around; some were mauled a bit; one was injured in the face. They had enough provocation to fire; but they withheld fire. They withstood the crowd and, finally, the local Egyptian police came, took the ringleaders into custody, and complimented the UNEF personnel. Eventually, the Governor himself came and commended them for doing their duty and also for the restraint which they had exercised; and what could have been quite a nasty situation was averted.

Also while I was out there an Israeli boy driving a tractor one day took too wide a turn and crossed the line into a field where, not far away, were a number of Arab farmers who, of course, immediately converged on this Israeli tractor on the wrong side of the line. But the UNEF people got the tractor and the boy back across the line and out of the way before any trouble could develop.

This is the sort of thing that is happening every day. I cite these incidents to give you an idea of what these men have to do on the ground, why their presence on the spot is indispensable. It has been asked why this cannot be done by aerial patrol. That would not work because the men have to have the line under visual observation and have to be in position so that they can get to the spot in person in a hurry and prevent situations from developing which would be troublesome and dangerous. In this, there is no substitute for their presence, in my view.

Just to make the story short, I would say that in every respect it is quite an amazing operation. There are 1,000 vehicles for this Force now operating under extremely wearing conditions. The sand chews up the insides and the outsides of the vehicles very quickly. It is a tremendous task to keep them running and in maintenance. The normal backlog for repairs was eighty-some vehicles a few weeks ago. In fact, it was almost 100, one-tenth of the full number, because the wheels get chewed up and the sand gets into everything. They are operating much more

effectively now because they have got sand tires and are able to go places where previously even jeeps and power wagons could not go. To see the repair shop and the efficiency of the Canadian operation in this respect is most encouraging, most impressive. In every respect supplies, such as hospital supplies, are extremely well organized. The hospital is certainly the best in that part of the world, and the problem is not only to keep the UNEF men healthy, but to keep all the Bedouins in Sinai from invading the hospital because of the very popular and expert treatment that is given.

That is about the summary of the situation. I might mention that the rotating is going very smoothly. There was one small incident while I was there. The Scandinavians were being rotated and an SAS plane came in at El Arish. The rains were late this year but when they came they were extremely heavy. The rain had softened the ground underneath the airport and the SAS plane, being very heavy, while standing on the runway suddenly began to sink. The ground beneath it gave way.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Including the runway.

Mr. BUNCHE: Yes. The Egyptians had just built, some distance away, a new runway for their jets, so they permitted the SAS plane to use the new runway. It came in handy.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: There is nothing bad that has not some blessed side, obviously.

I think this rather encouraging picture, which I can confirm from my own observation in January, is a very nice background for the less palatable side of the story to which we have to turn now. You have hinted at something from the sunny side -- the usefulness of a jet runway. May we turn next to the question of the overflights?

Mr. BUNCHE: Since the first of the year -- since December actually -- there have been constant reports of overflights from both sides, but with the burden resting heavily on the Israeli side; that is, many more overflights from the Israeli side. We had quite alarming figures actually. We have had an explanatory message from General Burns recently which indicates that, as is so often the case, the figures need not always be taken at their face value. We have had a total, between January and May, of 188 overflights observed by UNEF from the Israeli side and a total of twenty-six from the Egyptian side. But General Burns explains that of this total of 188, 162 were over the northeast corner of the Gaza Strip. This comes about as a result of Israeli jets taking off from a nearby aerodrome, the Wadi Sharia aerodrome -- which is just about twenty kilometres southeast of Gaza. The UNEF observers have not the usual instruments used for observing vertical flights of planes and they cannot always be sure whether they are overhead, over the Strip; so this means really that UNEF observed twenty-six overflights in areas other than this northeast corner between January and May. But once in a while these become dangerous in that they are not single planes, but squadrons, anywhere from three to eight or ten, and this, of course, becomes very threatening because it invites retaliatory action from the other side.

We have made strong protests to both sides regularly about these flights. We have not yet reached a position where we can say with any confidence that the protests have had much effect.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Quite apart from the risk of incidents, there is another aspect which should be emphasized, and that is, of course, that at Wadi Sharia aerodrome, twenty kilometres roughly southeast of the city of Gaza -- that is to say, in Negev -- there are sorties, some days as many as four, with a total of twenty-five planes, as I happen to recall was the case a couple of weeks ago. This leads, of course, to the opposite side -- the Egyptian side -- taking certain precautionary measures, one of them being that they cannot have their own jets, as they see it, too far back. They cannot have them in the Canal Zone because if -- perhaps without any bad intention, as General Burns points out -- they were to tip over in a dangerous direction it would be difficult to say when one should regard these matters as serious. Then of course the Egyptians would be in an absurd position if there was no possibility of interception.

Much as we dislike the fact that there is annexed, so to speak, to El Arish airfield, where we have our main facilities, this jet airstrip, we are, on the other hand a little bit caught by the developments and by events in the sense that it is, as you may see, exceedingly difficult to argue that, in a territory which is undoubtedly under Egyptian sovereignty, they cannot make arrangements which so obviously are related to these constant solid overflights from the jet airfield far to the south. I mention this because you may feel that it would be reasonable from our side to say that there cannot be anything of the kind in that part of Sinai. We may express our concern about it, our dislike of it, but, on the other hand, as I said, given the situation as it is, with the jet airfield far to the south in Israel and these constant overflights from the very field, it is obvious that the arguments and threats from the other side must be respected if we attach any importance to the sovereign rights of the country to make arrangements for self-defence.

On the other hand, it is quite obvious that these very advanced jet airfields, from a broader military point of view, are not very good military investments because they are, so to speak, with modern aeroplanes and jet aeroplanes, in fact behind the fighting line, on the wrong side in case something happens. All the same there remains the psychological factor which, in this case, comes heavily into play. This means that, apart from the risk, and the risk of unfavourable psychological reaction generally, we have this disadvantage of the overflights that, of course, tends to consolidate too advanced positions on both sides. What embarrasses us, of course, directly is the more advanced positions on the Egyptian side than on the Israeli side. For that reason, if you could stop all this it would be a considerable step forward. On the other hand, I would not say that it is an immediate sort of worry; it is just a nuisance which we should like to get out of the way.

Mr. BUNCHE: I said there had been twenty-six UAR violations; it should have been thirteen.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I think we might cover the whole ground, and then if you have any questions or comments it will be easier to present them on the basis of the full report. So, may we turn to the maritime exercises?

Mr. BUNCHE: This picture is more encouraging. There have been reports of incursions into Gaza waters by the Israeli fishing boats, or boats that appear to be Israeli fishing boats. In fact, UNEF had to set up an observation post right on the beach, with a big marker to show where the armistice line ran out into the sea. Some of the boats were coming very close, as close as one kilometre from the shore, which was inviting trouble. General Burns protested against this and thought he had an agreement that it would be stopped. But through January, February and March the situation continued to be bad. In January, for instance, UNEF observed many incursions well into Gaza territorial waters. There were fourteen in January, eleven in February, twenty in March. Each month there was some protest, some mention, made by the UN, either by Burns out there or by Headquarters, or both. In the last two months the protests seem to have borne some fruit because there have been only two such incursions reported during the month of April and none at all during the whole month of May. It may be that the fishing season is over.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I expect that is a very natural explanation. Finally, there is the third point -- the army, so to speak.

Mr. BUNCHE: That picture is not so encouraging. Last year, those of you who were here at that time will recall, in March, at the time of what the Gaza people called the liberation, they had a celebration marking the withdrawal of the Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip. It was quite a big celebration and the local authorities, in order to keep it in hand, so they said, brought into the Strip part of the Palestine, so called, Battalion, or Palestine Brigade, as it is sometimes called. These are sort of semi-regulars, Palestinians who have been organized and armed. They have been stationed ever since the Suez war at El Kantara along the Suez Canal. We know from quite reliable sources that they have been a source of some trouble to the Egyptian military because their families

are in the Gaza Strip; they are not Egyptians, but Palestinians. They are restive, they are poorly paid -- I think, £4 Egyptian a month -- and they have not rested easily in the hands of the Egyptian military. But when we protested about their presence last year after the celebration was over, they were all removed and sent back to El Kantara. I think they brought in about 400. They are lightly armed -- if you can call Sten guns light arms, but that is a sort of routine, casual weapon in that part of the world.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: A substitute for the old beautiful daggers.

Mr. BUNCHE: They came back for the celebration this March, and again their presence was protested, but, instead of being removed, they stayed on and there was even a report of their reinforcement. The Egyptian authorities contend that there are only about 400 or 500 of them. Some of our observers -- particularly the Swedish contingent which is closest to them -- made at one time an estimate of about 1,000. We have been pressing for their removal, and again one of the explanations for their presence, which is put forth rather strongly in Cairo, is that, with the present danger of Communism in the Near East generally and the particular danger of Communism infiltration among the refugees in the Strip, this is a security measure and purely a police measure.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I should add at this point that they say in this context that it should be rather obvious from the numbers that it cannot be anything more, because even if we say it is between 500 and 1,000, of course militarily, it is a senseless way of putting in troops in a general situation. Police-wise, it makes sense. From the other point of view, it is just so many people lost.

Mr. BUNCHE: It is quite clear that there is no military posture involved because a force of this size would have no significance in that area. The significance to UNEF, as emphasized particularly by General Burns, is that just the presence of a military force there --

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Para-military.

Mr. BUNCHE: -- para-military, of whatever size has an effect upon the psychology of the local population. It tends to change the attitude towards UNEF, to make it less friendly, less receptive, to create a situation which makes UNEF's job more difficult. But this matter is under very serious consideration in Cairo. We have some reason to hope that there will be an alleviation of it. The latest report which the Secretary-General had from General Burns was in a communication sent on 21 May, and in the course of it he said that at the present time no trouble was being experienced with the Palestine Battalion, and he said that the auxiliary army police -- which are not connected with the Palestine Battalion but are also armed and have a sort of vague relationship to the general police force in the Strip -- had been keeping pretty quiet. That is the last word we have had on this problem, but it is one to which we are fully alert and which we follow up and will continue to follow up.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: By "follow up" is meant, of course, that it is also continually reviewed between Cairo and us.

I think that gives you a fairly full picture of what we can tell as of today regarding the situation in Gaza and concerning UNEF. I am sure that this report gives rise to certain questions and perhaps clarifications are needed. Please take whatever initiative you wish in order to fill out the picture.

Mr. ARAUJA (Colombia): What kind of co-operation is given or effort made by the Governments concerned in the matter of putting an end to the situation in this zone in order to withdraw the troops sooner or later or to transform the Emergency Force into something not so expensive -- an observation group, for example?

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I am sorry to say that, for the moment, I could not mention any case of such co-operation. The situation in the Gaza Strip, politically and as regards the attitudes on both sides, remains very much what it has been all the time. So, for the moment, I do not see under what conditions

we could ourselves, with a good conscience, take any initiative to withdraw. The in between line is to run it in a different form, with more modest terms of reference. Of course, upon the reduction and reorganization of the Force, all I can say is that, given the present circumstances -- and the Commander is certainly there in agreement with his senior officers -- the advisability of such alternative seems to be excluded.

To give you an example of the atmosphere in that respect, which worries me, I can refer to incidents which you read about but which never came to the press in quite true and complete form. We had in early February a couple of incursions, the most serious one on 4 February when a small Israeli patrol went fairly far south into Sinai just south of Gaza, killed a woman and child and wounded another woman. It was a very, very bad story. We had luck because that is not an area where we have regular observation posts, but there was a Canadian patrol around who happened to witness the whole thing and were able to unravel it and to collect all the necessary evidence. The Israeli version, published at once, was to the effect that Arabs had penetrated into Israel and an Israeli patrol went in hot pursuit without knowing that it passed the armistice demarcation line and it did not know anything about any killings. That version got even the signature of the Government. It was the official version. We sent our report to the Government with a request for full investigation. Investigation proved that our version was the correct one and the version which had been published by the military authorities and endorsed by the Government was unfounded. That was admitted in an aside in the Knesset.

I do not complain here of the Israel Government in particular, but I mention the incident and what followed the incident as a basis for my complaint that we do not receive the kind of assistance which we need in order to withdraw UNEF. In this case a major story was avoided thanks to our patrol and thanks to our following through, but it could have rolled up a nasty story and the obvious way in which co-operation could have been given would have been, of course, to make this an example and to take a clean stand on our line. It was not done.

I repeat, I do not tell this story in order to accuse the Israel Government or to criticize anything. Such a story could happen from either side. There is nothing unique in it psychologically because there is a heavy political element

and a heavy prestige element involved, but I think it illustrates the hard core of the whole situation which, in a certain sense, lifts it outside Government policy made at a table and into the sphere of the psychology around the border and around the armistice demarcation line. The incident was the worst of its kind, but it was not unique. You can very well see that I feel that this kind of brake on the situation which we have in UNEF and this kind of policing, which makes it possible for us to track down stories of this type to the hard facts, is something which, for the time being, we should retain. It is not only a question of change of policies that is needed but a change of mentality, and I do not see it coming.

Mr. ARAUJA (Colombia): I wonder whether local businessmen have an interest in maintaining the troops in Gaza because it is profitable for them, and whether they try to maintain these dangerous conditions.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I would not say so. If you take this example -- God knows why the Israeli patrol behaved the way it did, but certainly it was without any background either in Jerusalem policy or in any local interest of any kind. And I cannot say that we have any trouble from the Gaza population which would indicate inspiration or pressure of the kind you have in mind.

Mr. BUNCHE: I think that you had in mind economic benefits that might come to the Strip from UNEF. The fact is I wondered myself to what extent UNEF might be a boon economically. I found this time that most of the procurement for the Force -- practically all of it in fact -- is from outside the Strip. There is very little procurement undertaken locally -- some citrus fruit in season, but most of that is shipped to Europe. So there is no vested interest in that regard.

Also, the trouble you mention -- what are the Governments doing? -- one might ask, what could the Governments do short of a settlement of the peace, removal of the peace obstacles, including the refugee question. Mr. Hammarskjold said that he did not see any change in the psychological attitude. There cannot now very well be one. I talked to some of the people, many of them refugees employed in

the strip. They said: "I take my children as close to the line as UNEF will permit them to go in order to look across the line and see where my land used to be. They can look across the line and see citrus groves and fields which their parents owned and tilled in their lifetime." Their children are on the Arab side of the line and have never been able to set foot in it. There is a bitterness about this. Remove UNEF and the bitterness takes the form of violence. Until the basic problems are settled -- and the most basic, in my view, is the refugee problem -- I do not see anything that the two Governments as such can do, and I think the problem of the refugees is something which is bigger than just two Governments. It covers the whole area.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I would be a little bit less pessimistic than you, but we need not go into that, because I came to the same conclusion. But it may be true, as you said, there is no vested interest; I do not believe there is. But, of course, there is always an economic interest, but I wanted to cut the line between those interests and what we know about the things which, so to say, cause us to insist on the UNEF operation. There is no such link which I have been able to observe; outbreaks, spontaneous or politically-motivated, do not seem to have this kind of background at all when they come about. On the whole I must say that the Gaza population, as such, is not the cause of trouble as matters now stand.

Mr. BUNCHE: That is right.

Mr. JHA (India): I just want to ask one question; I do not know whether it is a fair question. You have been in touch with both Governments -- the Government of Israel and the Government of the United Arab Republic -- and you said that there is not enough co-operation in respect of UNEF. Would it be fair to say that you receive a little more co-operation or less non-co-operation from one side than the other, and if so, what side? I know it is not possible to be very specific.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: It is extremely difficult to compare because the kind of co-operation we need from one side or the other side is not at par; they are entirely different things. I would, however, like to be quite clear, because there have been misunderstandings in the Press. I do not think that there are likely to be such misunderstandings here. There is no question that both Governments wish UNEF to be in Gaza -- both Governments sincerely wish that, and to the same degree; I do not know any difference in that respect. That is to say, there is no enmity, there is no hostility. There is a lack of co-operation which can be seen in various ways. I happened to refer to an example on the Israeli side. There are examples on the Egyptian side. But those failures to co-operate, to be of sufficient assistance from our point of view -- sufficient assistance -- I think mostly are explained by the fact

that the wish of the two Governments to see the UNEF continued clashes with other political interests; for example, on the Egyptian side to keep the refugees reasonably happy, or this or that; on the Israeli side, very often, prestige aspects of this or that type. I cannot equate them; I cannot compare them, because as I said they are on different levels. I would not consider the lack of co-operation on either side as an indication of what I would call ill-will or bad intentions. There is a sort of strain to stray in two directions; we want more co-operation. They have certain difficulties in giving it, and this balance is so to say maintained. I guess that the two Governments would say that we are a little bit too exacting, and we say they are not sufficiently co-operative. That characterizes the balance. This is as direct and complete a reply as I can give in all fairness.

Mr. RITCHIE (Canada): If I might just say, by way of comment, on the information which has been given with respect to the presence of these Palestinian para-military and so-called auxiliary police, a few words. I am sure our people at home would take a pretty serious view of this situation. It is reassuring to hear that this is being kept under active consideration with Cairo -- this whole situation -- because it is a rather worrying concern.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: I believe that there is fair reason to expect amelioration in two respects: one is that indicated by Dr. Bunche; let us call it a kind of thinning out -- being less and less apparent; and one is in a qualitative sense, in the direction of these people getting more and more para and less and less military. That seems to be the tendency that we have been able to observe. Historically it goes back not only to what Dr. Bunche mentioned but also to the flare-up we had in Gaza when there was trouble in the northern area which immediately had some repercussions down here. From my point of view it is not a question of rights in any sense, it is a question of fair conditions of operation for the UNEF, and I think we can look forward to the likelihood of improvement.

Mr. BUNCHE: In that regard I might add that probably one of the most dangerous things that could be done would be to disband them and leave them loose as individuals in the Strip. I think this would lead to very bad results.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: In that line I would say the ideal would be, as I see it and as matters stand, a reorganization, a re-education of them into purely civilian police, because if you have a population of 290,000 - 300,000 this would not in any way be excessive, to keep the whole thing in check, as local police.

Mr. BUNCHE: Under civilian administration.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Yes, under civilian administration. I think that is a stronger line for us to take than to say that they should be sent back. Anyway, we have it, as you said, Mr. Ritchie, under a kind of continuous debate with Cairo, and they know very well our basic stand and the direction in which we would like to see the problem resolved, preferably, of course, that they get out, but that is probably beyond what is reasonable to enforce -- a switch of character. Is there anything more on this point?

Then we turn to what is really the headache and that is one which can be localized to Headquarters, and not to the area; that is the question of financing the Force for the future. Ambassador Araujo already indicated part of the problem. Can we disband it? My reply was very negative. And that leads us to the next question, How are we to keep it together? Because fortunately the Governments who co-operate in the Force are very co-operative. I am glad to express our extreme gratification in the way we can work together with those Governments, but how we are to pay those Governments what is their due and to pay also for the other costs involved. I would invite the Controller to present the situation to you, again, of course, not for any kind of decision but in this case I would say rather as solid food for thought.

Mr. TURNER: Quite briefly, the situation as regards the financial outlook for the UNEF Special Account can be summarized somewhat as follows: First, if I may turn to what we feel is perhaps the basic problem, the situation from which our present, and more importantly our prospective, difficulties arise -- it is the situation as it concerns the arrears of UNEF assessments. These special assessments for meeting the expenses of UNEF over and above the amounts that have been provided by certain Member Governments in the form of special assistance have been approved by the General Assembly for the three years

1957, 1958 and 1959 in the total amount of \$55.2 million. As of the first of June, which I believe was yesterday, the amount of contributions collected, including credits, totalled in all \$32.7 million leaving a balance due, that is to say, arrears currently owing, aggregating \$22.5 million or approximately 14 per cent of the total amount so far assessed. Of this \$22.5 million there is about \$4.8 million owing from the 1957 assessments, about \$8.5 million owing from the 1958 assessments, and \$9.2 million remaining from the 1959 current year's assessment remaining unpaid as of today. Thirty Member Governments have made no payment of their 1957 assessment, that is the initial assessment; eleven have made only partial payment; forty-two Member Governments have made no payment of their 1958 assessments; two have made partial payments; seventy Member Governments have made no payments so far of their 1959 assessments; two have made partial payments.

Now, proceeding from that somewhat discouraging start, again, as of 1 June, yesterday, UNEF's Special Account, the net cash balance exclusive of normal operating cash balances, mainly in the field accounts, total \$1.8 million. Just to put that in somewhat proper perspective we have at the moment here at Headquarters thirty-five claims from Governments mainly awaiting payment, totalling \$3.6 million; in other words, we have bills which have been submitted, duly presented, certified check cleared, and could be, and indeed, should be, paid right now, certainly tomorrow; I hope they will be paid next week or the week after, aggregating at least twice the amount of cash that we currently have available for meeting those bills. I say I hope they will be met within the next fortnight, but, of course, that will only be as a result of the Secretary-General exercising the borrowing authority that the General Assembly granted him, which can be a temporary palliative and not any permanent cure -- borrowing at interest.

Just to round out the picture, and may I interpolate that I am sure that members of this Committee will understand how extraordinarily difficult it is to make any precise or even very reliable forecasts in terms of deficits, surpluses, cash requirements, cash collections having regard to the character of the UNEF operation and the somewhat unusual difficulties, complexities that enter into

budgetary financial and accounting problems relating to the UNEF Special Account. It is much more difficult to make estimates of this kind with the same degree or even approximate precision than it is possible to make such estimates relating to regular or normal United Nations budgetary operations. Nevertheless, we have had a sufficient basis of experience, and I think we can with some fairly reliable degree of accuracy anticipate just where we are likely to be in terms of financial supply some three months, six months or nine months hence. Looking forward, let us say, to the end of the current financial year, to the end of December 1959, going into 1960, we estimate that collections during the balance of this year may total about \$9.3 million of which \$5.5 million would relate to assessments, either 1959 or prior years; and about \$3.8 million to special assistance, that is, voluntary assistance over and above what has been assessed, pledged by four Member Governments, mainly, of course, by the United States, \$3.8 million, and about \$275,000 by the United Kingdom, and some \$10,000 by two other Governments. So, we can anticipate, and it is a somewhat optimistic forecast, additional collections totalling rather in excess of \$9 million. Against that we have to try to make the best forecast we can as to the estimated cash disbursements from now through the end of the year. The best guess we can arrive at -- this is being most carefully checked at the moment -- looks as though we would have to reckon on disbursing in one way or another -- the balance of 1959 -- a total of some \$17.2 million; that includes the \$3.6 million in bills or claims which are awaiting payment at the moment. A total of \$17.2 million during the balance of 1959 which, therefore, weighed against our anticipated cash receipts would result in a cash deficit by the end of the year of the order of \$6 million, a deficit which would have to be covered by borrowing either from the United Nations Working Capital Fund -- the Fund as you know is stabilized at a level and intended primarily for financing normal budgetary expenditures -- or from other funds in the custody and control of the Secretary-General. I might just add that on the basis of these estimates that I have given you, and taking account of the estimated costs of the Force for 1959, and what we describe as unliquidated obligations at 31 December, would total approximately \$11 million; and the arrears of contributions outstanding at the same date might reach a total of approximately \$17 million, a difference between those figures representing the amount that I had indicated we might have to borrow from one source or another by the end of December.

Now, I think it is necessary to point out that a figure of a possible cash deficit of \$6 million does not seem in itself too serious a problem to cope with; but having regard to the somewhat precarious state in which our Working Capital Fund currently is, and is likely to be at the same date, we could cover it unquestionably but not for very long. It means in effect that our sources, our total available cash resources for all United Nations operations and activities including normal budgetary disbursements, would be fully committed very early in 1960. We would still, of course, have to find the money for meeting UNEF's normal continuing monthly operations -- an amount that we figure on the basis and on the assumption that approximately the present strength would have to be maintained and that the same composition would prevail -- we figure that amount would work out at about \$1 million a month. The UNEF budget for the current year, as you will recall, was approved at a level of some \$19 million. That included a provision of \$1 million by way of an addition to the reserve that has been established for meeting in due course claims from Governments furnishing contingents, for reimbursements of expenses or equipment that has been lost or has depreciated. That is a paper reserve because it does not mean that the cash exists; it is a reserve which would exist if there were not these arrears of contributions. It is possible that the \$18 million -- that is the \$19 million less \$1 million reserve -- it is possible that we may be able to make some further economies, but on the basis of a very careful on-the-spot review of the situation recently completed by my colleague, Mr. McCaw, and Mr. Vaughan, it does not appear likely that any substantial or appreciable deductions can be anticipated in 1960 -- again, on the assumption that UNEF will need to be maintained at the present level of strength and its present composition. We will do our best to get that figure down somewhat, but I think it would be unwise to anticipate any very appreciable deduction. So that, frankly, by January or say February of 1960 the situation will be indeed critical in terms of arranging the means by which ordinary running costs can be financed, including as well the cost of reimbursing contingents, providing Governments for the extra and extraordinary expenditures that they incur, particularly by way of pay and allowances for their troops. Some Governments have been very helpful -- shall I say, not in a hurry to submit their claims -- but that is not a situation that we can properly expect to continue indefinitely, and indeed, the indications are that we will have to gradually get on a much more current basis of reimbursing these claims than has been the case during the past

two years. So that, I do not think that we can anticipate quite the same time-lag, that has prevailed in settling bills and claims once they are presented. Therefore, as we see the picture, there is an urgent and a most serious problem, if UNEF is to be maintained, of seeking ways and means for taking care of the cash situation, which could become very critical before the end of 1959 but certainly will be a major issue by the beginning of 1960. Needless to say the Secretary-General has given thought to ways and means by which the situation might be alleviated, but as I indicated earlier it is difficult to see if there is any real or lasting solution so long as this arrears situation prevails. I think members of this Committee will be aware of the resolution adopted by the last session of the General Assembly inviting Member Governments to furnish their observations or suggestions to finance UNEF in the future. We have, as of today, received some twenty-one replies, I think two have arrived in the last hour, making a total of twenty-three replies; eleven of these indicate that they favour an assessment of UNEF's expenses among all Members on the basis of the scale of assessment adopted for the United Nations budget; five have expressed the view that the States which took the action which resulted in the creation of the Force should pay its expenses; three have merely indicated their inability or their unwillingness to pay for the Force; and four others favour assessment on all Members but on a scale of assessment different from that adopted for the United Nations normal budget.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Well, gentlemen, the centre of the problem is, of course, the arrears. And as the arrears problem is in its turn composed of two different sub-problems: one, slowness of payment, and one of a political nature, there is no possibility to get a 100 per cent solution to the arrears problem. Slowness in payment, yes, certainly. The political aspect of it, most certainly not for the time being, short of a change in basic political conditions. That makes the situation rather unpalatable because whatever solution we may devise in the United Nations Secretariat, it will be a palliative which so to say, let us be frank about it, basically is a palliative to avoid the consequences of the politically-motivated arrears. That is where we are. I think it is as unpalatable

from the point of view of the majority of the Members as it is for the Secretariat. But, on the other hand, short of a solution to the political problem I just do not see how this kind of compromise can be avoided, that by this or that means we get the necessary cash resources, carrying on the arrears through the years. Of course, it is a key consideration from my point of view that we should get over the political difficulty and get all Members into the picture as loyal payers, so to say, of their contributions, according to the assessment; but we cannot gamble on it, and for that reason we must find a way to agree on palliatives. The problem being a cash problem, thoughts go, of course, in the first instance to this or that kind of arrangement related to the Working Capital Fund -- that is the natural first line. But I would not necessarily say that the natural first line in this case also will be the final line in the proposal. Were it to be so, were we to find any other solution, I need not tell you that it really would be with more than hesitation, and only because of the feeling we have for the United Nations operation itself, that we would certainly, say, tax Members, because of the failure of other Members to follow the decision of the General Assembly. But there we are. As I said, it does not require any decision, certainly not now. But I think it would be most helpful if you, who are in a special way related to the UNEF operation, would give thought both from the political angle and from the cash angle, because it is a problem of such difficulty and such proportions that I think we must really combine our best thinking in order to see how we can get forward. The final responsibility for the proposals in this case, of course, will rest with the Secretariat, but we certainly would be most grateful for your consideration of how best to handle this situation.

Mr. NIELSEN (Norway): There are some stray remarks that can be nothing but that, in view of the considerable wealth of information which we have just received here and which to some extent need national assistance and assessment, in particular, by the countries who have so far participated in the Force. They must, of course, take assessments in the light of the situation as drawn up. My first stray remark, Mr. Secretary-General, would be that I agree entirely with the Controller that there does not seem to be any further possibility of any order of magnitude of savings. That is the very firm impression which we have gotten as one of the contributing nations. There must be a certain quality and there

must be a certain orderliness in local operations, and in particular of a Force composed of very numerous nations, and not the least in the light of the local picture just given to us by Dr. Bunche -- that being the first stray remark.

The other one is, of course, I can do nothing more than agree with you, Mr. Secretary-General, that the desirable solution to this problem would be that the political reasons for the shortage of cash could be overcome. On the other hand, as representative of one of the countries who have a contingent there, I think that we would be rather following an extraordinary budgetary practice if we were to base ourselves on such a hope in the financial relations between you and us. So it really boils down, as you said so rightly, to a matter of solving or getting the arrears which are mainly a matter of slow payment. There are degrees here between the clear-cut political position and slowness in payment which is partly administrative practice and partly has overtones and undertones of political views with regard to how the expenses should be distributed.

Withholding any kind of remarks which might be indicated as to where the Norwegian Government would find itself, if this is not alleviated -- nevertheless, I think I am justified, after all, being a representative of a small country and having contributed to this Force, both manpower-wise and economically, apart from the regular part of the assessment, to try to appeal to everybody here represented, who do belong in groups and groupings of the United Nations, that each one try to take upon ourselves to assist the Secretariat and the Secretary-General with whom the responsibility rests, that each and every one take upon ourselves to go back to our groups and try to put up against each other the political repercussions of discontinuing the Force for fiscal and financial reasons, which is really why we have an assessment and the possibility of assessing on the basis of the picture as given to us by the Secretary-General and Dr. Bunche. I hope that that would give some betterment in the case, and it seems really to me, if I may say so, Mr. Secretary-General, a bit pitiful that an operation of this political importance and which has had such obvious political consequences should get into that kind of situation as it is now for a fairly low number of millions of dollars which, assessed over the eighty-two Members or some seventy nations, in order to cut out the clear-cut political problem which we cannot solve here. It does not seem to be proportional as between the problem and the consequences.

The The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Any further observations?

It is somewhat ironical if we come to the point where new problems of not a similar kind but of a related kind for a United Nations activity were to come forward and we had this kind of minor financial crisis on the operation which we have under way and which worked so well. It may be perhaps that if we get farther on the same road of United Nations activities itself in the field, that we would break the political deadlock, but we cannot gamble on it. I think we fully appreciate the contributing countries which want to be paid, naturally, they have already taken on an extra burden by putting their manpower at our disposal. It is not unreasonable to expect that they would not like that kind of gamble -- as you pointed out. It is a very vague hope and nothing more. As I said, there is perhaps nothing but to take note of this situation. But I repeat what I said, whatever thought you may care to give to it, whatever ideas you may have, would be very much appreciated on our side. We will go ahead with our efforts, of course, to reduce arrears and so find the proper budgetary way to handle the situation, because I need not stress that the assumption under which we are working is, of course, that the UNEF should be maintained and that in all events if it is liquidated it is not for financial reasons.

Finally, we have the point of the annual report to the General Assembly, and perhaps Dr. Bunche can say some words about it.

Mr. BUNCHE: I would just like to say that we would propose to follow about the same course in organization as the previous two years with regard to the reports which have been made to the General Assembly, that is, the same organizational pattern. We have never had any comments from the members of the Committee as to their reactions to the reports that have been submitted and we thought it might be useful at least to give the members an opportunity to indicate whether this general form and organization commends itself to them or whether they would have changes to suggest.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Any observations?

Mr. NIELSEN (Norway): I also take it for granted that the financial picture which has been given here would be brought out clearly.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Very much so.

Mr. BUNCHE: That is part 2 of the report. It would be clearer and stronger than before in substance.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: You may, on the other hand, find us rather reticent, especially concerning one point we touched upon previously, and that is the question of the Palestinian battalion and auxiliary police. The reason is obvious enough, not that we wish in any way to withhold information but simply that our work in that field, I mean, to keep things on the rails and straighten them out where they have to be straightened out, is fruitful and possible if it is treated entirely outside the public view, and of course, might easily become completely intractable; the whole problem might become completely intractable if any element of prestige were put into it. That is the only reason why we will lie low on that, in what we write in the report. For the same reason, I need not mention it, because it is the rule of the game here, I would appreciate if, especially on this point, you would keep it as private information, because the wrong kind of story somewhere might, so to say, set us back in what on the whole is a promising development.

But regarding the report, when do you expect to have the draft? It may be that at that stage we can compare notes.

Mr. BUNCHE: The financial section, I understand, will be ready within the next few weeks or so -- two weeks. Part 1 has to do with the functioning of the Force, which follows the pattern of previous reports, and will not be ready until we have the latest data from General Burns, in August. In other words, 1 August is his deadline for getting the material in so that the Assembly gets a yearly view covering the year, and then we usually bring it up to date with any new data on incidents just before it is released to the Assembly in September.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: That would be about the time when, in all events as we wish to maintain this current contact, we might ask you to join us again

and hear what has happened further in the field and then we might compare notes, if there are any delicate elements in the report, or the organizational report, which we would like to bring up with you, that is to say, in late August or September.

Mr. BUNCHE: Yes. The reason is to give the General Assembly the latest possible picture with regard to incidents.

Mr. RITCHIE (Canada): I was just going to say one word in connexion with the report. I wonder whether this year, in view of the situation which the Controller has put before us, there was any even further explanation and justification for the size and cost of the Force which would be included? If I might just say at the same time, I would like to associate myself with what our Norwegian colleague has said on the subject of the financial position, about which I am sure my Government are very deeply concerned.

Mr. BUNCHE: I have anticipated that. I have already asked General Burns to send rather more details this year than previous years concerning the deployment, functions, disposition of the men and the hours spent on the line and in support camps so that the Assembly would have the fullest possible picture of the actual load activity the men are carrying in performing this function. Then it becomes a question of whether there is some reduced function that could be done, which would be for the Assembly to decide. But the function as now defined is policing the line, so to speak, and will be described in considerable detail.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: Is there any point which you may wish to raise?

Mr. NIELSEN (Norway): With all this gloomy information, Mr. Secretary-General, if I may just add to it that the Norwegian Minister of Defence made a visit to the Gaza area, in particular visiting the Norwegian contingent. I just received, by way of a letter of a fairly private nature, his over-all impressions and with some very few and rather insignificant exceptions, his impressions were very positive -- and that goes for the actual operation, it goes for the

Commander and the leadership. I think there is one sentence I should like to quote here, when you compare, when you consider the great difference between the nations as we find them at home and the conditions under which they serve and they are rather tedious also, as you explained.

"I had a very interesting trip to Gaza, and got a good look into the conditions and many impressions about how our officers and men like the duty there. Let me say immediately that the main impression is very good. Both the enlisted and officers do like the conditions and do not regret that they have five to six months stay in the surroundings, even though these surroundings are fairly grim. There were no complaints about food, whereas there were a certain number of rather minor customs which did give rise to irritation."

This was the over-all impression, and this was also the basis upon which I emphasized the leading to the stray remarks that further savings which lead to further bottlenecks with regard to the rather insignificant items which they consider immaterial should be avoided, I think.

The SECRETARY-GENERAL: We happen to end on a somewhat brighter note than the one struck by the Controller.

Well, gentlemen, if there is nothing else, I thank you. We may get in touch with you late in August. I hope we need not do it before then, because it would be a good sign that things are all right.
